

THE HARD ROCK MAN



FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

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BY

FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT



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TO
MY WIFE, ADELE
WHO HELPED ME WRITE THE STORY

THE HARD ROCK MAN

CHAPTER I

THE construction camp of Snowslide lay in the depths of the canyon bed, a gray and yellow scar. The gray dump stretched along the side of the brawling stream; at its head clustered the buildings of unpainted yellow pine. Here in the middle the portal of the tunnel yawned, a black spot on the mountainside.

They had been boring Snowslide tunnel eight months; they would be at it three years more, making a short-cut for the railroad through a three-mile barrier of the living rock. In the eight months they had littered the place with man-made desecrations; on the hill the bunk-houses and dining hall; by the stream-bed the timber-sheds, the blacksmith shop, the power-house smearing the tree-tops with black smoke, and the lean gray dump where the muck trains clattered to and fro. Beside

their track the outside gang labored, shoveling away the loads which the cars brought to them.

There were six of them bending their backs to the heavy toil. Five worked near together; the sixth, at a little distance from them. All the morning they had been working this way, the five in close company their backs toward the one, a little interval between the group and the solitary figure. The five were Slavs; they were short, thick-chested men with long muscle-bound arms; their eyes slanted slightly toward the corners. Their fingers were crooked, warped to the shovel handles. They shoveled deliberately, with precision, working like slow-moving machines. Occasionally one of them glanced obliquely at the sixth man; then said a low word to the others, and they laughed. It was a low laugh with no ring.

Toiling thus by himself Tom Morton, the sixth man, shoveled the broken rock awkwardly. He was an Irishman. It was his first day on his first job since he had left a little rented acreage across the sea. And he was young. He worked with eagerness; he made strength do where skill was lacking. He crushed his shovel blade into the heap of

rock before him; he threw each load far from him over the edge of the dump down into the stream-bed. He sweated with excess of effort, striving to do more than any of the five whose backs were always toward him. At intervals between the muck trains—after he had scraped together the last fragments of his pile and tossed them away—he straightened his back and rested. Then he looked upward at the mountains, along their steep sides black-green with mantling hemlocks toward their sheer rock summits cutting the sky's blue with ragged silhouette of brown. They were the first mountains he had ever seen so closely. Green Irish hills lay a little more than a month back, fresh in his memory, low rolling hills rising away from a broad river. Standing on the edge of the dump leaning on his shovel handle, he turned his sweating face upward toward the rugged peaks. They were very dark; they seemed to touch the sky like lofty walls.

He leaned upon the shovel; his big hands gripped the handle, hiding it; his long arms extended rigidly from his wide shoulders bent now to the reaching—for he was very tall, tall

and broad; in his hands the shovel looked like a child's plaything. His upturned face was fresh with color, large featured, beardless. His eyes were the clean, hard gray that never changes, save to glint like metal. They regarded the mountains steadily. Thus he stood, every line of his rough-clad figure, from his clumsy shoes to his squam hat of oilskin, proclaiming his awkward strength. Then the muck train brought a new load and he bent his back again to work.

The muck came from the tunnel; it was wet, broken granite, among the pieces, fine grit made paste-like by seepage. It was heavy, hard to handle; it tangled before Tom's shovel point, then disintegrated suddenly leaving the blade all but empty. He sweated over it, swinging his shovel stiffly, pushing it by main force into the heap, lifting huge loads, throwing them many feet beyond him. He was anxious to do his share, willing to do more than his share if there were any question. At times his breath came heavily and he sobbed with the muscular effort. He was handling one-fourth more than any of the others.

The five Slavs worked with stolid faces, their

eyes upon the ground save only when one of them glanced slantingly at Tom striving noisily alone, and spoke the low word which made his fellows laugh. They wormed their shovel blades into the rock, tossing it just clear of the brink so that it rolled down the side of the dump. Each of them handled exactly the same quantity covering an unmarked division whose proportion to the other four never varied. And always there was the same discrepancy between each of these allotments and the amount which Tom covered.

The sun climbed toward the middle of the blue segment of sky that roofed the canyon bed. It glared upon the mountain sides and the tree-clad mountains threw its heat into the bared patch of camp. The dump caught the rays at their focus; its gray surface shimmered with vague waves. The outside gang toiled unshaded, and sweat dropped from their bodies to the broken stones at their feet. It soaked Tom's shirt; it ran into his eyes. His fingers ached to the hard touch of the shovel handle and when he paused to rest they stiffened and became sore. In their group the five Slavs were swinging their arms like sluggish pendu-

lums. Suddenly Tom heard among them a low exclamation, subdued but sharp. And at once he saw their demeanor change.

They were working stolidly no longer. Their faces were tense, alive with energy. Their shovels were flying; the muck shot from the blades far over the edge of the dump down into the stream-bed. Their short, broad backs were bending down, then straightening up in spasmodic movement. They grunted with their efforts. It was not eagerness to do; it was rather as though someone whom they feared were compelling them. Tom heard a footstep on the track and looked up.

A man was passing. He held Tom's eyes like a divinity. He was a huge man, red faced, of mighty girth. He was well clothed, and on his head, tilted to an aggressive angle, he wore a derby hat. Rubber boots encased his legs. In his tie a diamond glistened. His mustache bristled fiery red. He was walking wide-footedly, striding as one who always gets all the room he wants. His head was back and his arms swung free. He looked at the outside gang, a quick, intolerant glance that swept them in an instant. The five Slavs

cringed and dropped their eyes to their flying shovels.

It was The Old Man, the superintendent. In the heart of the mountains here he ruled. He had charge of the work, the two camps on the opposite sides of the granite peak with their power plants, their clanking machinery and six hundred men. He commanded the bosses; he was supreme. Tom gazed upon his broad back swinging down the car track. It was like watching the passing of a superior being.

CHAPTER II

THE sun shone hot that afternoon, swinging toward the western mountain wall. At regular intervals the black hole disgorged the muck train. It clattered along its uneven track to the outside gang and stopped. The motorman stood idly leaning against his controller box, while the cartender withdrew the keys and dumped the loads. It was heavy shoulder-lifting and he always called one of the five Slavs to help him. The Cartender was a broad-faced young Irish-American; his wide mouth was continually widening good naturedly. When his helper was slow he cursed the man volubly and loudly. Once after he had done his tongue lashing he looked over at Tom and winked slowly.

While the empty train rattled away the six of them fell to work upon the wet, broken rock, always the five Slavs together, their backs toward Tom. He felt his isolation and in spite of the new labor that it brought he looked

ahead for each return of the train because it carried this one man who showed feeling of fellowship, whose face was that of his own race.

The only other visitor they had was the outside boss. He came from the head of the dump at long intervals and remained a short time watching them. When he looked at the five Slavs his eyes, trained to such details, caught at once the amount each of them had apportioned to himself. They went to Tom and noted the discrepancy between each of those portions and that over which he sweated. The boss frowned after he had made the survey but he said nothing and he went away.

At six o'clock the power house roof emitted a jet of white steam. For some minutes the five Slavs had been working with their eyes in this direction. As soon as the steam-cloud showed against the green-black background of the mountain they dropped their shovels and ran to pick up their coats. As they were running the shrill call of the whistle reached Tom's ears. He laid down his shovel and followed them slowly up the dump toward the boarding camp.

The buildings of the boarding camp lay to the right of the tunnel portal on the first rise of the hill, glaring structures of yellow pine, three bunk-houses, the general foreman's cottage and the dining hall. Each of the bunk-houses was designated by a single letter painted sign-like on a board: A, B and C. The general foreman's cottage was similarly lettered, D. It was nearest to the track, close to the huddle of buildings about the portal. The dining hall was well up on the hill behind it near the three bunk-houses. Its front steps were now black with men, members of the day shift waiting for the doors to open. As Tom turned to the right and was passing "D" quarters the Slavs had already joined this crowd. At the same moment the wide doors opened. There was a crash of heavy shod feet, a shout from the center of the crowd now surging up and inward billowing with the struggles of its members to hasten their advance. The steps roared with the beat of the great boots and the mass of men seethed into the wide doors. Then a white-aproned man stood alone on the porch beating upon a triangle. Stragglers came running from the three bunk-houses,

some pulling on their coats, others bare-headed and in their shirt sleeves. After the last of these had hurried up the steps Tom entered the place, tired with his day's work, somewhat confused with the newness and the suddenness of the things about him.

It was a long, many-windowed room, bare-floored, with rough board walls. Overhead, the roof timbers were browned by smoke from many meals; the shingles showed through wide spaces between the boards. In the rear, cut off by a low railing, the kitchen opened; about its hooded range two bare-armed cooks bent over steaming cauldrons. At the railing aproned waiters, rough-garbed like the men whom they served, lingered briefly for huge tins of food or hurried away bearing their smoking burdens. Three tables stretched the length of the dining hall, flanked by pine benches covered with oilcloth.

Two of these tables were lined from end to end by the men of Snowslide. They sat close wedged, elbow to elbow, busy at their food. For the most part they were big men, large-boned, wide of chest. Their faces were at once heavy and alive, heavy with largeness

of feature, alive with reckless lines of action; some bore ragged scars, and some were tattooed blue from burning powder. The men were clad in the rough garments of their toil, oilskins still dripping moisture, coarse flannel shirts, their sleeves uprolled above great arms, their fronts yawning over hairy chests. They were eating as they had toiled, heavily, with effort, crudely. No fabric of etiquette had been woven round their feeding to hinder movement. They ate like animals, to supply a need. From the high-heaped, steaming pans before them they lifted their food in enormous pieces; and the waiters raced back and forth to maintain the supply. There was little speech. Now a giant growled a monosyllabic demand and another giant, complying, shoved toward this one a laden pan. Occasionally a colossus laughed and the dishes shook before the diapason. Always came the clash of the knives on the tin dishes and the noise of the eating.

Tom stood near the door looking for a place. A man beckoned him, smiling widely, and pointed to a vacant space beside himself. It was The Cartender. "Set down," said he,

“an’ pitch in, an’ remember, God helps them what helps themselves.”

It was good food. Tom ate a long time and when he had done the last stragglers were filing outward through the door. The Cartender remained beside him, whittling tobacco in thin shavings from a brown plug. He rolled the shavings together in the palms of his hands and filled a black briar pipe. He lighted it and drew a few long puffs. “Well, Irish,” said he, “how d’ye like ut?”

Tom smiled quietly into his eyes. “’Tis alright,” he said.

“Them Polackers,” The Cartender went on slowly, rising from the bench; “they’re ridin’ ye.”

Tom looked at him inquiringly and shook his head.

“Ridin’ ye,” said The Cartender. “Givin’ ye the worst of ut. They don’t do their share.”

“I can shovel more than anny wan av thim,” asserted Tom. He did not understand why. The Cartender chuckled.

As they walked to the bunk-house Tom drew a short-stemmed clay pipe from his

pocket. He filled its black bowl and puffed placidly. His big, young face was grave, half-puzzled. "I did more than anny wan av thim," he reiterated finally, "and can do more than anny two."

The Cartender stopped his grinning and looked at Tom kindly. "Ye are green," he said, "but ye will larn. On public works ye always can find plenty that's itchin' to let ye handle more than yer share of the muck. Them scum on the outside gang is always layin' fer a white man. Ye must make them do what is theirs to do."

"Ye mane?" asked Tom.

"I mean they're laughin'," said The Cartender; "thinkin' how smart they be to let ye do most of the work."

They went to the middle bunk-house, "B" quarters, the largest of the three. In addition to its shift of tunnel workers it held the outside gangs. Bunks flanked its long, bare-floored room on three sides; on the fourth were the entrance and the door that opened into the heading foreman's office. The bunks lay in two tiers; heavy timbers supported them. In a corner near the foreman's office was a sink

with hot and cold water faucets, where the men washed themselves. In the center of the room, hung round with steaming garments and surrounded by board benches, there was a long heater stove. The benches were now occupied by a dozen of the drill runners from the day shift, big-boned men with hard, scarred faces—save one whose little body was bent, warped as though the rock had been too much for it. He had lost an eye and his face puckered into a thousand wrinkles around the empty socket. Beside him sat the largest of the crowd, a crop-haired giant with blue pocks of burned powder on his cheek. The group were talking of the work and these two were evidently authorities, for whenever one of them spoke the others let their booming voices die. Tom's bunk was near the stove; he sat on the edge and listened to them.

The talk went to The Old Man, the red-faced superintendent, whose passing on the dump that morning had held Tom like the passing of a divinity; the head of the work, master of their masters, driver of those who drove them. The crop-haired giant smote his knee with his huge, gnarled fist. "Gunnysack

Ryan," he cried, and there was in his deep voice at once familiarity and awe, "Gunnysack Ryan, I know him; I've known him this fifteen year; an' The Gunner here, ask him. Ryan! Why we seen him when he was raw from the bogs; green I tell ye as that there boy." He waved his hard hand toward Tom and the other giants, looking with the gesture, laughed.

"How about it, Gunner?" asked one; "does he know hard rock?"

The bent little man lifted his puckered face and smiled, a slow, wise smile. "Gunnysack," said he; "he don't know hard rock an' nivver did. By all rights he's a steam shovel man. He c'n make a steam shovel climb a tree, he can, but he don't know hard rock. It's the men he knows; the *men*, I tell ye." He paused expressively and let it sink in. "The Old Man," he said, "is a driver, that's what he is; a driver; that's all there is to ut. He makes the others do ut."

"That's right, Gunner," several shouted at once. "A driver he is."

"Look here!" cried the big man they called Jerry. "Look at The Gunner here. He

knows the rock; none better. An' what's he doin'? Him that's pulled more rock than anny of ye; more than Ryan ever see. Why, he's runnin' his slugger in the headin', runnin' a drill like you an' me, drivin' tunnel fer The Old Man. Look at the Walker an' the headin' bosses! *They* know rock; an' where are they? Bossing to-day, runnin' a drill to-morrow. Pullin' rock fer Ryan, because he knows enough to make them do ut. He drives them. He always did an' always will. He handles men, he does; *men*, not rock."

"That's right, Jerry," said the little Gunner. "He makes us do ut for him and makes us like ut."

The broad-faced Cartender came and sat beside Tom, on the bunk's edge. "Listenin' to them stiff's drive tunnel?" he asked. "They're always at that between pay days when their money's gone an' they've been trowed out from the saloons. Always drivin' tunnel. They'll blow the stove pipe through the ruff some night, puttin' in too big a shot." He laughed at his figure. "Listen to them now," he said; "handin' ut to The Old Man."

"How did he do ut, Gunner?" one of the

younger men was asking. "How did he get his start?"

The little man smiled and was silent for a moment. "Well," he said finally, "it come this way; somewan crossed him wan day and Ryan licked him; and that was the size of ut. He pounded his way up."

"That is right," said Jerry. "Thim that trod on his toes or crossed his path, he mastered thim. When he got his first shift he hild thim under his big fists an' always done so since. And they like ut. Manny's the time his walkers curses him—behint his back, mind—but they'd go to hell fer him just the same. Yes, I think it is his fightin'. Raymimber Big Martin, Gunner?"

"I do that," laughed The Gunner, and lifted his warped face. "'Twas on the big ditch. Ryan had been blowed up wit black powder an' they had him in bed wit his arms an' chist all bound up in cloth an' oil—an' two min to hould him down when his head wint back on him. The day before he'd had a bit av an argument wit this here Martin—he was big as a house—an' this night Martin comes in the dure. 'Who is that?' asks Ryan. "'Tis me,' says Martin. 'Oh, 'tis ye, is ut?' says

Gunnysack. 'Well, I'm glad to see ye.' An' wit that he climbs out of bed, rippin' the bandages where they helt down his arms, an' he lept on Martin an' handed him the pannin' av his life. And his arrms an' chist like a beefsteak."

The laughter shook the roof timbers overhead. The Gunner raised his hand to silence it. "But it is not that," he said, soberly. "'Tis not the fightin'—Ryan has the head. There's thim likes to boss an' thim likes to be bossed. He likes to boss, an' he does ut."

"For phwy is ut?" Tom asked The Cartender, "that they call him Gunnysack?"

The Cartender scratched his head. "I remember now," he said; "I heard Big Jerry Morley there tell ut wan night. 'Twas back in the Pondereille country, years ago, whin they was buildin' this same road. He was green then, like you, lad, fresh from the Old Sod; and he was a mucker. The weather was cruel cold an' he seen how the Polackers wrapped gunnysackin' round their brogans to keep their fate the warmer. So he did ut. Three or four years after—he had a shift then on some rock work back in New York—some-wan come who had seen the baggin' on his fate

and told ut. An' so they called him Gunny-sack."

"Not to his face," said Tom.

"Haw, haw, haw," laughed The Cartender. "Not to his face; well, no; they did not."

A few minutes later the janitor came and turned out the lights, all but a single incandescent over the stove, and the drill runners went to their bunks. The place became silent. Heavy breathing rose round the shadowed room. From his own bunk Tom lay looking about him. The single light swung slowly to and fro, shifting brightness and blackness in regular time. Tom's mind was busy with the things that he had heard and seen; the men with whom he toiled, the five Slavs who held their backs to him and laughed unpleasantly; the good-natured Cartender who had told him why they laughed—because he had done what was theirs to do; Ryan, the red-faced master, who had once been like him, "Raw, fresh from the bogs; green as that there boy"—he remembered Big Jerry's words. And this Ryan had mastered others and made them like it. He slipped into slumber with these things in his thoughts.

CHAPTER III

EVERY night after that Tom sat on the edge of his bunk, listening to the drill runners "drive tunnel" round the bunk-house stove. He sat, his big body bent forward and his large, young face upturned eagerly to catch each word. For to him these hard-faced giants were mighty men, and they told of mighty things. He hearkened while they recounted deeds done in far places, where they had rended the living rock from the mountains, rough deeds of reckless men. They told of tempests that had beaten them while they toiled among the snows; of a sun that had blazed upon them in desert wastes; of towns that had rung with wild shouts and reeked with brawls, where every night saw murder done, towns that had long since fallen to heaps of ruins beneath the deepening shadows of hemlock forests; of shaking rock that had thundered down and obliterated men in the midst of strivings; of premature blasts that had annihilated whole shifts. They

bragged of toil and drink; they spoke familiarly of lawless women and they laughed at sudden death. He listened, watching their faces, lined with recklessness, scarred by marks of toil and fight. Their booming voices made his blood stir with vague longings of emulation; their wanton words and rude gestures and their oaths were to his mind signs of brave spirit.

Best of all he liked to hear, and most carefully he cherished, the things they said of The Old Man. The crop-haired giant Jerry and the bent little one-eyed Gunner had known Ryan longest and had followed him furthest from job to job; these two told of his mastery, and of the assertion which had made him rise. They told how he roared his orders and his curses, until sometimes whole shifts rushed hither and thither, while Ryan stood on rock or wheelbarrow or other small eminence, red-faced, wrathful, bullying them, driving them. Always there was purpose behind it, assertion that brought obedience and made men cling to him, and when they abused him behind his back abuse him fondly.

And so Tom passed his first evenings rest-

ing from the heavy work, hearing the story of how The Old Man had come to master these reckless men. The Cartender often sat beside him and added details to the anecdotes. Sometimes he told Tom of the work which these men did, of the inside of the tunnel, where the air drills roared, beating against the living rock, of the booming blasts and the dangers in the black hole's depths. Gradually the feeling of strangeness was passing from Tom before the interest in this new world, its deeds and its men.

But the days were dreary. The five Slavs always talked together in their own tongue, working with their backs toward Tom. They never had a word for him and they never had a look for him, save the side glances when they laughed unpleasantly. On the dump they kept thus by themselves and in the bunk-house they hung together in the corner furthest from the stove, where they slept. There none had speech with them; they were pariahs. And on the toil, when he was alone with them, they treated him as a pariah in his turn.

Their attitudes and manner spoke of the silent conspiracy against him of which The

Cartender had warned him. Often—when the rock came out in large pieces, each piece a carload—the five united their efforts to roll over the brink such of these as fell to their share. Never, unless the outside boss was near, did they offer such help to Tom; and then in sullen silence.

He watched them silently day after day, studying their manner of shoveling, catching the little tricks that made the toil easier. Then he practiced himself these smooth economies of motion, until gradually he learned to swing his great arms to absolute purpose, without any loss of energy; and was able to handle twice the amount he had handled at first. He found himself doing it—more from day to day. In spite of the knowledge which The Cartender had imparted to him, which he had verified by what he saw, he felt pride in this—no heavy-featured alien could beat him working. And he let them go on drawing a little further from him, and then a little further still, until the discrepancy became marked; until he found them laughing more openly at him, talking more often in tones of ridicule.

He had now mastered the knowledge of shovel handling, and he had begun to feel less strange. Sometimes, now, when he heard them chuckling and saw them glancing obliquely at him, he felt his rage rise within him, and the desire grew strong to leap upon the nearest one and beat him down. Loneliness oppressed him here; he had no speech with anyone save The Cartender. While the muck train paused the two of them talked together on the dump as they did in the evenings, listening to the drill runners "drive tunnel."

"How would a man be afther gettin' to run wan av thim drills?" he asked The Cartender one morning. It was the first expression of a growing longing to go where there was the excitement of more reckless work. They were standing on the track, leaning against an empty muck car. Inside the shift was shooting the bench and there was a stoppage in the output of muck, a respite for all who handled it. The Cartender was whittling plug tobacco into his palm. He snapped the knife shut and began rubbing the shavings in his hard hands.

“ ’Tis aisy enough, sometimes,” said he, “if ye’re workin’ inside, muckin’. After pay day the shift is always short, runners an’ helpers raisin’ hell downtown. Then if the boss thinks ye’re likely he may put ye to helpin’, and if ye hold yer job ye larn enough to run a machine in time.” He rammed the tobacco into his pipe bowl, and as he lighted it a dull jar came from the mountain. “They’ve shot,” said The Cartender; “we’ll be goin’ in now.”

Tom watched the train until it vanished in the black patch at the foot of the mountain, swallowed by the darkness where he longed to be. He turned slowly and his eyes fell upon the five Slavs. They were talking together in their own tongue, and as he looked he saw them glance toward him and laugh. His eyes rested on them steadily and he got a bold stare. One of them—he was the biggest, a short, thick-chested man with bowed legs and arms that hung down to his knees, giving suggestion of an ape—sneered with coarse lips. Tom’s fists were clenched so tightly that his nails hurt his calloused palms. His eyes grew cold like metal and the Slav’s eyes fell. A moment later they were working elbow to

elbow, shoveling away the muck, and Tom was determining on a course of action.

On its next trip the muck train brought huge granite blocks from the rended bench. There was one of these to every car. When the train had receded the five Slavs gathered round one of the largest pieces which had fallen to their share. The biggest man among them, the leader, picked up a long pinch bar, bent by many prying, and inserted its end beneath the rock. He gave a guttural command and the other four came toward him to take hold. Then Tom tightened his lips and took a step toward them. His fists were doubled, his great arms swung from the shoulders, elbows out from the body. They heard him and looked up.

He took two more steps—he was within five feet of the leader now—and pointed to a longer bar by the trackside.

“Pick ut up,” he said quietly. His voice came from his chest, gruff with the command; his glinting eyes were fixed upon the leader. For an instant the man stood in his tracks, staring wide-eyed at Tom over his shoulder. Then he straightened his back and started to

say something to the others. One guttural word had come from his throat when Tom was upon him.

He seized the Slav by the collar, twisting him from his feet, then flung him upon the bar to which he had pointed. "Pick ut up," he said again evenly.

His eyes were cold now and a hard light played on them. They swept to the other four Slavs; the four shrunk from them. They went back swiftly to the leader. He was scrambling to his feet. His face was bleeding where it had struck the dump. In his hand he clutched a stone. Gaining his feet he whirled toward Tom, with arm upraised behind his shoulder. Tom looked upon him steadily. The Slav's eyes lowered and he dropped the missile.

"Quick," Tom ordered; "pick ut up."

The Slav glanced toward his four fellows. They were staring sullenly at the ground. He bent down and picked up the bar.

Tom looked toward the others. "Come here," he bade them. They hesitated a bare instant. Then they came slowly. He gestured mutely toward the rock; they seized the

bar and began prying it over the dump. When they had done he called them to the next. "This wan now," he ordered. To his bidding they handled the trainload. For some moments he stood looking them over. "I boss," he said finally; "mind that."

CHAPTER IV

ONE evening, soon after his assertion of authority, Tom left the dining hall and went alone to his bunk. It was still daylight and many of the men were outside. Sitting in the silent room, he held his face between his two big hands, his elbows on his knees. The loneliness of his life was heavy upon him. As he sat there the grip of the evening seized him, a quiet evening when sounds came mellowed from long distances. He left the darkened place and stood outside looking at the mountains.

The green of their hemlocks was not green to him; the mountains were black walls. He started walking slowly down the trail. His hands were behind his back, folded; his broad shoulders bent a little and his head leaned forward. He was looking straight before him and he did not see the things on which his eyes fell. The air was damp with a soft breeze from the west, a breeze from the sea, whose

moisture had gathered tribute from inland valleys and mountain meadows until it was laden with sweet odors. It caressed his cheek like soft, cool finger tips. Its perfumes bathed his senses. His mind went far away. The Cartender, on his way to the bunk-house, ran against him at a turn in the path and recovered his balance with some difficulty.

"Man!" he cried. "Ye have a heavy fut. Ye tromped all over me. What is ut takes yer eyes from where ye're goin'?"

Tom looked at him as if he had not heard the words. "Did ye iver see the hills of Con-naught?" he asked.

The Cartender grumbled and took a limping step beside him, looking upward at his face. "I was a kid when me father left the Old Country," he said more softly.

"Grane, grane they are," said Tom. "Ye nivver see ut here; so grane an' saft an' low! Ah! and in the avenin' ye can hear the little childer callin' from far off." He loosed his big hands and dropped them limply to his sides. His shoulders straightened and he looked at The Cartender wistfully. "Did I thread on yer fut?" he asked. "I was thinkin'

av the Ould Counthry. 'Twas somethin' come over me to-night."

The Cartender smiled—It was as a man smiles at a boy—"Come wit me," he said. "I'm goin' to take a stroll an' watch the train come in. I've a letter to mail."

When the Cartender had gotten his letter in the bunk-house he found Tom bending over a wooden chest, which he had dragged from beneath his bunk. He had thrown back the lid; his arms were elbow deep in the interior. As The Cartender came he drew out a coat. It was of homespun cloth, a coat with two long, narrow tails, which dangled oddly, with a row of large buttons down its front. Tom held it over his forearm and he passed the thick fingers of his other hand over the rough fabric, caressing it. He laid it softly down on the bunk and began groping again in the chest. Finally he brought out a hat. It was a curious hat of stovepipe pattern, thick, coarse gray felt narrowing toward the crown, with a flaring rim. He brushed the crown around with his finger tips, smoothing it, and his fingers lingered on it kindly. Then he shut the chest and rose.

The Cartender watched him curiously as he threw off his working coat and began donning the homespun garment. It fitted his huge shoulders tightly, so that he had to struggle a little, working his arms into the sleeves. The two narrow tails dangled from his waist. They were surmounted by two of the large buttons. The Cartender's eyes widened as Tom turned his back to him. Then his broad mouth grew broader; he started to articulate, but stopped. His heavy face became very grave. Tom picked up the hat. He placed it on his head carefully, so that the tall crown was well back and to one side. He faced The Cartender, who was gazing at him now in silence. Finally:

"Ye brought them over?" The Cartender asked politely.

"Yis," said Tom soberly. "They were me faather's."

"Ah, yes," said The Cartender thoughtfully. There was a pause and The Cartender shuffled one of his feet irresolutely.

"There's a bit av a shtick in the chist," said Tom; "a bit av the thorn. 'Twas me faather's, too. But I notice that they do not

be carryin' a shtick on a walk av an evenin' here."

"No," said The Cartender. "No; they do not." He scratched his head, so that his squam hat tilted forward over one eye, and he struggled inwardly.

"'Tis a pretty pace av cloth," said Tom.

"The coat?" asked The Cartender.

"Yis," said Tom.

"Ye do not see them often here," said The Cartender. It was his maiden effort at tact; it left him confused, doubtful whether he had said too much.

"No," said Tom; "ye do not. I don't ray-mimber seein' wan since I landed." His eyes came to The Cartender's and The Cartender smiled into them squarely, very kindly.

"I like ut," he said. "My father had wan like ut. I mind him wearin' ut when I was a kid, in the avenin'." He started toward the door. "We'd best be movin' on, I guess," he said cheerfully.

There were two trains a day at Snowslide, one from the east and one from the west. The latter came down over the switchback by which the road now crossed the mountain. It came

from Seattle, arriving in the evening. It brought supplies in the express car, and frequently new workmen in the smoker. Besides these recruits, gathered in Seattle employment offices, there were usually one or two passengers of importance, engineers or bosses, returning from brief vacations in the city. Also there was the bundle of daily papers. The train's brief pause was a main event of the day; it was like the halt of a passing civilization, at which the crowd on the platform might gaze through the windows. When Tom and The Cartender neared the depot they saw that the place was jammed.

Half a dozen of the older drill runners were laughing together on the edge of the platform; near them a few muckers, heavy-faced, silent, awkward in posture. There were a dozen or more from the town: the postmaster, a storekeeper, a pair of saloonmen and a group of gamblers; these last, white-handed, long-fingered men, with faces that bore unhealthy pallor. Two civil engineers in khaki and laced boots gossipped in the baggage room with Gunnysack Ryan. The superintendent was without his high rubber boots this

evening. He wore in their stead shoes that shone lustrously; and he had on a black suit, with carefully creased trousers. His diamond glistened from a spotless linen shirt front.

"He's come to meet his wife an' girl," said The Cartender. "He thinks the world of his women folk, does The Old Man. They're the only ones c'n boss him."

They were passing close by the hard-faced drill runners now, elbowing their way into the crowd. Someone noticed Tom and exclaimed aloud. There was a laugh. Looking up, Tom saw himself surrounded by broadly smiling faces. As he went by the wide door of the baggage room he heard a sudden oath from Ryan. Glancing in, he saw the intolerant gray eyes, intolerant no longer, wide with astonishment. A long whistle sounded up the track and his attention, with the others', flew to the approaching train.

A moment later it roared among them; halted with a grind of brakeshoes on wheels; and stood, the locomotive panting, the air sobbing in the pipes. Baggage crashed upon the platform. Tom watched a handful of rough-clad men struggling with huge blanket rolls

on the steps of the smoker. They were hard-eyed men and they cursed wantonly as they fought with their luggage. Something made him turn his eyes toward the rear of the train.

The Old Man was helping two women from the steps of the nearest Pullman. As Tom looked, Ryan handed a dollar to the bowing porter; then he kissed the two women, and the three of them walked together down the platform. Tom stood transfixed; Ryan held him staring. The man had changed completely; his whole bearing was different. He walked between the two women, and the wide mastery had gone from his stride; he was trying to fit his steps to theirs. And his eyes had changed; it was as though they had been tamed, as though the intolerance that usually looked from them were a horse that had been suddenly broken and bridled and was now being driven sedately. He bent his head to talk and to listen, and every line of his huge figure spoke deference. These were his women.

Tom noticed the elder; she was tall and her shoulders were wide like a man's. She wore expensive ready made clothing. Her face was hard-skinned and red, as though it had been

roughly rubbed. It was lined with the lines that come from years of work; the lips were very firm. She talked to The Old Man, quick, short words, and he hearkened, bending his head. Tom looked at the other, the younger one, and his eyes dropped before hers. She was laughing at him.

Her full, young lips curved mirthfully and her wide, brown eyes were alight with amusement. She was not more than eighteen; the unworn bloom was on her cheeks; and the laughing eyes beneath the mass of auburn hair still had that softness which endures but a few years after childhood's passing. Hair and eyes and transparent skin, beneath which the color fluttered swiftly, were like a bit of his old land brought before him. And yet he saw that she was laughing at the things he wore, the hat and coat. He realized it now, what the others had been laughing at. The knowledge made him redden, a blush of mortification that was not shame, and of anger. It was as though she had laughed at him for wearing a bit of green. He looked up at her, this thought in his eyes, and then he looked away, reddening again. This time the mortification

was centered upon himself. For his glance had found her—still smiling—with wonder on her face, and it had left her, half startled, half hurt. It was as though he, a stranger, had stepped up to her and had spoken a rude word of reprimand. He turned and walked away.

“Look at the hat!”

He whirled with narrowed eyes toward whence the voice had come and faced the group of drill runners. He scanned every face steadily—there were a dozen in the circle, some of them men whom he had heard “driving tunnel” around the bunk-house stove, among these Big Jerry and The Gunner. They met his gaze with suddenly aroused scowls. Finally he halted in his search; he had found the man. He was one of the rough-clad men whom Tom had seen leaving the smoking car. His huge roll of blankets lay beside him on the platform. Near him stood a number of his fellows. Among the reckless-featured men of Snow-slide these newcomers were a hard-faced crew, hard and reckless to the point of fierceness. And of their faces this man’s was most deeply lined between the brows and around the lip ends. There was something wanton about

its scowl. The heavy-browed eyes were a little bleared. It was not the blear of drink; rather that goes before drink—the white-gray obscuration of violence. His black hair hung straight over his low, seamed forehead. He was bigger than any of them, bigger than Jerry Morley, as large a man as Tom. And the men around fell silent as these two looked at each other, with heads thrust slightly forward.

They looked steadily; and then, as Tom was opening his mouth to speak the word that would have brought issue, Jerry Morley clapped him on the back.

“Never mind, lad,” he cried good-naturedly; “ferget ut. That hat is better Irish than the man that said ut. I’d be proud to wear ut St. Patrick’s day meself, an’ so wud he.”

The drill runners laughed. The upper lips of nearly all of them were long, and their mirth was good-natured. But Tom’s eyes still remained narrowed. It was the group of lead-faced gamblers that saved a clash. Standing nearby, they had heard everything, and now they crowded round, eager for the promised quarrel. Big Jerry turned on them.

"Anny of you tin horns lookin' fer trouble?" he inquired elaborately.

The other runners whirled with him. The most of them had good cause to dislike these men, who came to the camp once a month, and departed always with a good share of their earnings. They growled at the gamblers and forgot Tom.

The engine bell had ceased a brief interval of clanging. There was a sigh of air from the brakes; the train began to move. The Cartender came hurrying from the mail car where he had posted his letter. The gamblers were leaving now in close order pursued by the gibes of the drill runners. Tom went in silence up the track with The Cartender.

Finally The Cartender spoke. "Did ye see The Old Man when his wife got hold of him?" he asked. "She's the wan boss he has. He thinks the world of his women folk, does Gun-nysack. That girl of his is growin' up to be as big as the Old woman." Tom made no answer. The Cartender looked at him, "What's on yer mind?" he asked.

"I am grane," said Tom slowly; he was staring straight ahead.

The Cartender was silent now. Tom walked on thinking. Suddenly he burst out, "For why should the Irish be afther laughin' at the things av their own land, answer me that?"

"There was no man laughed but would fight fer them same things, Lad," said The Cartender, "Not wan of them."

But Tom was not thinking of the drill runners.

Behind the two of them The Old Man, walking with his women, looked at Tom and chuckled, "There's the greenest Mick since I landed at Castle Garden wit me bundle on a stick," he said, "Luk at that hat!"

His wife laughed kindly, "Poor bye," she said, "He's sick now for the Old Country I do be thinkin'. Luk, Nora, at that coat. 'Tis the sort yer grandfather wore on a market day."

Nora was looking. She was thinking, not of the coat, but of the tall, straight back beneath it, the bigness of the man, and the eyes that had rebuked her masterfully. She said nothing.

"Them Cœur d'Aleners," The Cartender was saying, "Ye saw them?"

"Who do ye mane?" asked Tom.

"That new bunch of runners," said The Cartender, "Ye had some words wit wan of them, Big Kennedy. What was ut?"

Tom's face darkened. "He laughed at me," said he.

"He's tough," said The Cartender, "Him an' his gang. The Dynamiter, they call him; he was here once before. Now he's brought the drove of them back wit him. They blowed up a mill somewheres back in Idaho an' they're here wit bum names. They're a hard gang; but The Dynamiter, Kennedy he calls himself, is a good runner. He can pull the rock. An' he c'n fight. Best lave him be."

In the bunk-house Tom dragged out his wooden chest and opened it. He took his coat in his hands a moment and stroked it tenderly before he laid it in its place, carefully folding back the two thin tails over the body of it that they might not wrinkle. Then he took the hat; he held it longer than he had the coat. As his thick fingers passed over the rough crown he felt the soft, damp breeze of an Irish evening and he saw long, low hills rolling back from a wide river, soft, green hills melting

into a softer sky. He lowered his big face close to the hat, and to his nostrils there came faintly like an old memory the odor of peat smoke. He saw a hearth where red embers glowed steadily and a low-beamed ceiling. He was on his knees beside the chest. He stayed there for some time bending over the hat. Then he placed it carefully away and shut the lid.

CHAPTER V

"WHAT are ye lookin' at?" The Walker asked the Outside Boss the next morning. The Outside Boss was sitting on a pile of timber half way down the dump. He beckoned The Walker to a seat beside him and pointed to the place where Tom and the five Slavs were working, one hundred feet away.

"Well?" said The Walker. The Outside Boss repeated the gesture.

"I'm watchin' that big Mick, Jack," said he, "Some day there's goin' to be the devil to pay on this dump."

The Walker looked at Tom, who was standing, his part of the work done, pointing to a patch of muck. And as he looked The Walker saw one of the Slavs begin shoveling this over the side.

"Who is that tarrier?" he asked.

"A green lad," said the Outside Boss, "Two mont's over an' a matter of a month on the

job. Them Polacks tried to ride him at first; Now luk at him."

"He'd best watch where he goes after dark," said The Walker, "Why don't ye send him inside?"

"I tried to," said the Outside Boss, "Two days ago I told him he'd have trouble wit them, an' he says: 'Av ye plaze Sor,' said he, 'I'd like to shtay a whoile; I'll not let thim dhrive me aff.'" He mimicked Tom's brogue with the love an Irishman has for it.

Tom leaned on his shovel handle watching the Slav finish the work. The other four Slavs held their eyes upon the ground and were stealing glances at the pair from the corners of them. Their sweating countryman was the largest of them, the slant-eyed leader whom Tom had compelled to pick up the bar. He scowled as he threw the muck from his shovel.

Watching the man, Tom realized the price of mastery. He had asserted himself to get his rights, and now he could not relax. He had to rule to keep his place. It was the knowledge of sullen rebellion ready to break out whenever he gave it a chance that had

made him refuse the offer of the Outside Boss to get him on the muck gang at the foot of the bench. He had denied himself his own wish to go inside the tunnel from an aversion toward leaving while his authority was in any wise questioned. And so the Outside Boss had clapped him on the back crying, "Stay and welcome, Lad, but make them fight in daytime. Hammer hell out o' them in the day an' luk where ye go at night."

And he had waited while the month's last days had passed. They were dreary days, always the five backs toward him, always the five averted faces, the eyes stealing sidelong glances from the ground, always the talk in low toned gutterals which he could not understand, whose import he could not help but feel. They never laughed now.

Often in the bunk-house he had noticed them sitting in their own corner with their eyes upon him, five pairs of eyes watching him sullenly while he sat beside The Cartender listening to the drill runners "drive tunnel." The Cartender had noticed it too.

"Where were ye?" he had asked one evening.

"Afther a bit av tobacco at the commissary," said Tom.

"Yer friends, what did they get?" inquired The Cartender jerking his thumb toward the corner where the Slavs usually sat. It was empty.

"Two nights ago," said The Cartender, "ye mind ye went for them socks? Well, they went too. Luk there now!" One of the Slavs was entering the bunk-house. A moment later another followed; then the rest.

And so the thing had gone, an impending crisis that had made Tom chafe.

This was payday morning. In the evening he would get his first check. The thought dominated him and made him feel kindly toward all the world. It made him prone to forget details about him. As he shoveled he smiled frequently. And even as he smiled this thing had happened—He had seen the little heap of muck which the leader had left untouched; and then, while the two bosses watched, he had made the man shovel it away.

All that morning men passed on their ways to join the long line before the station agent's window. The groups were laughing and jest-

ing and some of them called out to the outside gang. From where Tom worked he could see the town, a row of flimsy, unpainted wooden buildings, for the most part dance halls and saloons. They were surmounted by gaudily painted canvas signs. During the month this had been a silent place. Now it was filling up. Men passed to and fro along the railed sidewalk; they hurried in and out of the wide-open doors.

A little after four o'clock in the afternoon the day shift leaped from the cars of the outcoming muck train and ran down the dump, a clamorous crowd. From among them came laughter; the deep voices were cheerful. Tom watched them rushing by and caught the cheer. *His* check was waiting at the depot—it was the day he reaped—his first check. All of it was his. He knew the amount to a cent. With The Cartender's help he had figured out the deductions of board and commissary bills, and knew what would be left—the balance, his savings. He thought of that. The world was bright—clean sunshine and fresh air. He smiled as he worked.

The Slavs saw him. Even they seemed to

have caught the spirit now. The leader crooked back his lips before his yellow teeth and pointed toward a group of belated muckers hurrying after the day shift.

"Plenta monaay, hey?" the slant-eyed man cried.

"You bet," said Tom. He was becoming proud of his Americanisms.

There were many empty places in the dining hall that night. Fully half the men were downtown. After supper Tom hurried to the station. On his way he heard a piano thumping and from somewhere among the row of wooden buildings came a long, loud whoop. When he had gotten his check from the agent, weary with several hundred such payments, he hurried to the nearest saloon and cashed it. Then he went to the post office.

Daulton, the postmaster, was also the camp's druggist. Although the company had a hospital and a surgeon at the other portal, Daulton was known in Snowslide as "The Doctor." It was his semi-official title. He had borne it for many years—in the days of construction, when his drug-store had been an institution of every large camp from the Rockies to

Puget Sound. He was English born; he always wore loud-patterned tweeds and was immaculate as to his linen. His manner was a mingling of dignity and affability, of condescension, incumbent upon his position and semi-comradeship which stood him in good stead as a tradesman. He had one great advantage in this latter respect: His position of postmaster allowed him to know the name of every man in camp. He greeted Tom punctiliously from behind the counter.

"Good evening, Mr. Morton," he said bowing gravely. "A fine evening."

Tom grinned. It was the first time in his life that anyone had ever prefixed the title "Mister" to his name, and The Doctor's manner flattered him. "Good avenin' to ye, Sor," he replied.

The memory of that "Mister" bothered him a little; he was not altogether at his ease.

"What is there I can do for you, Mr. Morton?" The Doctor asked.

"I come to buy wan av thim postal ordhers," said Tom. "'Tis a good way to put by yer money, I'm tould."

"Ah yes." The Doctor straightened and

became official at once. "It is indeed. But we can't do that now, Mr. Morton, the hours are from eight until five."

Tom was perplexed. The Doctor saw his disappointment. He had seen the incident of the station platform where Tom had faced Kennedy and he had heard the Outside Boss tell of the domination of the five Slavs by this raw hand. And among other things The Doctor admired a fighter; it was almost awesome, this admiration, born of love for boxing matches. Already he had regarded Tom as a possibility in this line. For this reason he resolved to extend small favors.

"You see," he explained, "that is the law, and if I were to let down the bars I would get into trouble." He smiled at Tom across the counter; "But in your case," he said impressively, "I don't mind making an exception." While he showed Tom how to make out the application, he looked at the big arms and body, and imagined them stripped. "My word!" he muttered, "My word! What beef! And a good eye, a good, steady eye!"

"There we are," he said aloud and handed over the blue paper slip. "Keep that, Mr. Morton, and when you want your money you

can cash it here. A wise thing; you won't find many doing it. What part of Ireland are you from?"

"From Galway, Sor," said Tom.

"Ah, Galway," said The Doctor, "a beautiful county. I was in Galway twenty years ago." He talked of the green hills rolling back from the Shannon and Tom's heart warmed. "Good avenin' Sor," he said, departing.

"Good evening, Mr. Morton," bade The Doctor. "That money order, a wise move. You'll be rich some day. My word!"

Tom caught the twinkle in his eye and grinned. "'Tis jokin' ye are!" he cried, and they both laughed together.

He was cheerful with the whole world to-night. This talk of home—And his savings were in his pocket, the blue slip, the concrete realization of many dreams. It was a good country, this strange land, for all its frowning mountains, a place where he could earn and save, where others had risen to mastery of men.

Passing the saloons he gazed curiously into their wide-open doors. The long interiors blazed with light; they were alive with men.

Rough faces were upturned toward the flaring lamps, some of them faces he had seen around the bunk-house stove. Rough voices arose in laughter or loud anger. The places roared tumult. He stared at it all. And once he stood rooted before a doorway where a bare-headed woman in a loose red gown screamed a song at the cold, clean stars.

He picked his way across the dump and up the hill to the boarding camp. The bunk-house was silent; the benches around the stove were empty. As he entered, the heading foreman came from his office and went on out into the night. In their corner, close together, heads bent to a common center, sat the five Slavs. They were talking in their own tongue. Immediately upon his entrance they raised their eyes and stopped talking. Then the outer door slammed shut behind the heading foreman and there was silence.

Tom went to his bunk. He sat down on the edge. A laugh made him look around. It came from the five Slavs in the corner. As he looked one of the group said a low word. They laughed again. The leader arose and came toward him.

CHAPTER VI

'As the slant-eyed leader came toward Tom's bunk the other four Slavs rose from their seats. Tom sprang to his feet.

In the instant that he sprang his nostrils caught the smell of iodoform, a common odor in the camp where someone was always hurt; and afterwards whenever the smell came to him it brought a picture. It was as though his eyes at this time took a photograph which this particular touch upon his senses invariably reproduced, a photograph in poise:—Five men, one man ahead; four men a pace behind. The five were bareheaded, in their shirt-sleeves, their shirts open on their chests. The leader was stooping slightly forward in the act of stepping. His thin shirt fluttered with an indrawn breath and as the chest rose behind it the heavy mat of hair thrust beyond the parted cloth; then it fell away again. His arms hung ahead of his short, thick body, to a little beyond his bowed knees, slightly bent.

The knotted fists were clenched. The slanting eyes glittered and the lips twisted away before the crooked yellow teeth—a warped man with arms too long and a forehead like an animal's.

The four men behind were half-crouching like their leader, their arms hanging down by their knees. One of them, a black haired man whose frame was slightest, was a little to one side. Tom remembered afterward that of all, his attitude was least eager, most sure. The incandescent lamp by the stove was swinging slowly, shifting shadows and high lights upon them. Their faces caught the high lights and stood out, big-boned, beneath the gleaming eyes. Then the shadow obscured them and the long arms showed, hanging low, crooked.

Tom stood erect, his head and shoulders loomed above the upper bunk beside him. His head was bare and his thick brown hair was in some disorder of half-curls. His coat hung loose; he was fumbling with one hand at the lower button. His eyes were almost half closed; and they were steady; the shifting light played upon them, glinting from them as from metal. Thus they stood, the one man and the five, ten feet between them.

The instant passed; the Slav leader swung his foot and bent forward into a quickened stride, a half leap. Tom caught the button of his coat to place. At once his arms flew up, fists forward, elbows out from his sides. He sprang across the interval between him and the slant-eyed leader.

It was sudden, without warning of attitude, from erectness of posture to half-double; from stillness to a leap—an instantaneous change. He charged and the advantage of offensive passed to him. He spanned the ten feet in two strides.

As Tom sprang the Slav realized the change. Instinctively he faltered, a brief hesitation. His body straightened and his two fists raised toward his head. It was a posture almost of defense. And while he was in the act of taking it, Tom was upon him.

Tom's fist shot forward while the Slav was again collecting himself for deliverance of a blow. It struck him fairly upon the snarling mouth. The man left his feet, his body hurtled through the air, and he crashed upon the floor.

Like their leader the four Slavs had faltered

as Tom sprang. For an instant they too, had stood half-irresolutely. As Tom struck they had recovered, and the blow had hardly been delivered before three of them sprang upon him. They caught him with his arms still extended from his body. One grasped him round the waist; Tom shook him off and the man fell still gripping his legs. The two others flew at his throat. One of them struck wildly out as he came, the other ran in, head down, his fingers clutching desperately. Tom wrestled trying to tear them away. The leader was struggling to rise from the floor now; his breath sobbed in his open mouth. The black-haired man remained apart, half crouching, watching them in silence.

Then there began a struggle that shook the building. The two Slavs clung to Tom and their feet swung clear from the bunk-house floor as he tried to toss them from him. The warped fingers of one were twisting at his throat; the other hung to his right arm snarling in the effort to climb inward. Tom shook his shoulders like a huge bull and raised his arm to fling its incubus away. As he did so the man at his legs tugged with all the strength

that was in him and Tom tottered almost falling. Recovering his balance he freed one foot from the embrace; then swung it back and kicked with all his force. The booted sole struck full on the Slav's jaw; he fell back limp.

Unhampered now, Tom sprang backward and swept his arms apart. The two struggling men went back with them. He brought his arms together with the two men in them and one of them dropped heavily at his feet. The leader who had risen, watched it, then sprang at Tom's waist, head forward. Before the momentum of this charge Tom went down carrying with him this new assailant and the man who still hung to his throat. The three crashed among the benches by the stove. They rolled over, a struggling heap, carrying two of the benches with them and suddenly Tom felt the thick fingers slipping from his throat. He broke from the embrace of the arms around his waist and started to rise. As he was gaining his feet he saw the two Slavs crawl away from him; they ran toward the bunk-house door. Then he saw the black-haired man coming toward him.

The black-haired Slav was coming slowly, stooping forward; his right arm was outstretched almost full length. Something gleamed in the hand, something metallic. From it came a long, red spit of fire. There was a loud crash and then the smell of burning powder. Smoke rose in a thick cloud. In the instant Tom realized that he had seen the weapon and that the shot had missed. Beside him lay one of the overturned benches, upended across another. He bent down swiftly, seized the bench in both hands, and, raising it over his head he hurled it at the dim shape in the midst of the smoke-cloud.

The bench hurtled through the wreathing smoke, and as the wreaths parted, eddying round it, Tom saw the black-haired man stoop and let it pass. Then the Slav straightened, and his arm thrust forward again in deadly motion, like a striking snake. The revolver barrel gleamed, swinging in a half circle; it became fixed and the warped finger crooked around the trigger. Tom felt a mighty blow upon his chest. He knew that he was falling with the roar of the report in his ears.

CHAPTER VII

THE OLD MAN and Jack Tarpy, The Walker, were standing on "D" quarters' steps discussing Tarpy's one failing. The Old Man was talking, "I'll have ye know," said he, "that what drinkin's done, I'll do. Down to Leavenworth there is a priest, and there we go, ye and me, and ye'll take the pledge. That's—"

They both stiffened, "Where the hell was that?" cried The Walker. "In the bunk-houses," Ryan shouted. "I'll twist the head from the ruffian did ut!"

They ran together down the steps and up the hill. The Old Man forged ahead. With agility out of all keeping with his weight he kept his lead climbing the narrow path. The Walker panted at his heels. The crack of a second shot came to them as they ran.

"B quarters," Tarpy shouted. Ryan barked an oath over his shoulder and increased his stride. He reached the bunk-house steps,

leaped to their top, and without wasting time to turn the knob, burst in the door.

The room was hazed with smoke. In the fog, dim figures moved, bent low. Ryan rushed toward the thickest of the hanging wreaths where he made out something in a huddle on the floor. A man brushed by him gliding toward the door; Ryan caught the gleam of a pistol barrel, "Stop him, Jack!" he shouted, and Tarpy entering, seized the black-haired Slav by the throat and right wrist, twisting the arm until he heard it crack. The weapon dropped heavily on the boards. "Not so fast," he grunted, and hurled the man from him, among the benches. "We'll see what's here first." He stooped and picked up the revolver. "Now!" he called, "stand fast!" He circled the room with its muzzle and began collecting the five Slavs in a group as a highwayman lines up his victims.

Ryan was dragging Tom toward a bunk. "What is this?" he demanded. The door swung open as he was asking the question and half a dozen of the drill runners who had been drawn to the place by the noise of the shots, entered. Tarpy called to them; "Here Jerry,"

he ordered, "you an' Gunner, come and lend a hand. Get these five into the corner there and hold them." The drill runners crowded round the Slavs growling at them like savage dogs, and Tarpy ran to Ryan who was bending over Tom, "Hell's fire!" he said, "it is that big Mick."

"The man is shot," said Ryan, "in the front of him." He pointed to a round hole in the breast of Tom's heavy coat. At the same moment Tom opened his eyes and struggled. "Aisy," panted Ryan, "aisy, we'll not hurt ye." Tom stared at him with wide eyes and relaxed. "I'm alright, Sor," he said, quietly.

"Rip them clothes from him," said Ryan; "here help me." The two of them tore off the heavy coat, then a cardigan jacket and the woolen shirt. As the last garment came over Tom's head, something hit the floor, dully. Ryan bent and picked up a flat disk of lead. "The bullet!" he cried, and looked at it curiously. Tom rose to his feet and shook himself. On the white expanse of his chest a blue mark showed, tinged with red.

"Lord!" said Tarpy, "what are ye annyhow?"

Two or three drill runners crowding close

behind him muttered oaths of wonder. "Right again the breast of him," muttered one, "he's iron chisted."

"Iron chisted nawthin'," growled Ryan. "'Tis the clothes of him done ut. Wool stops a ball better than steel sometimes. That cardigan done ut."

"Good Irish wool!" cried another and there was a laugh.

Ryan whirled on them blustering, "Shut up," he ordered. "Get out of here!" Over in the corner where Jerry and The Gunner had superintended the gathering of the battered Slavs came ugly mutterings now. Ryan heard them, and looked around. "Take them over to 'D' quarters to yer office, Jack," said he, "and kape them there till I come." When the crowd had moved away he turned again to Tom. "Now, what was this?" he demanded.

Tom told him what had happened. He was dizzy and his chest was sore, but otherwise he was unhurt; and his head, for all its ringing, was clear. When the story was done The Old Man called for the Outside Boss and The Cartender. And when he had heard them, he cursed the former fluently. "Do ye think

this camp is a Dutch picnic, that ye shtand by and watch a fight brew?" he demanded. "Let that be fer town; I'll have no more of ut here." He glared at Tom. "And you," he said. "Who are you to be bossin' a gang? Ye'll be wantin' to handle my job next!" He scowled round at the men who had come now from all parts of the camp and even from the town, drawn by the swift tidings. He swore at them and stormed out of the room. On the steps he met the heading foreman and gave him a dressing down for allowing trouble to foment in his bunk-house. He found Tarp in "D" quarters, glowering over the prisoners.

"Get them scum down to the train," he ordered. "Take a dozen men to see that they get there, and tell them never to set fut here again or I'll have them hanged. And say, Jack," he added in a lower tone; "that lad licked the five of them single-handed. I'd give me mont's wages to of seen ut."

The Walker grinned. "Did ye see the body of him?" he asked.

"He's big as a skinned horse," said Ryan; "and he has the nerve behind ut. Ye shud have him inside, helpin' on a machine; he's

too good to waste on a muck-pile." He turned, about to go, then stopped and laughed. "I remember him now," he said. "He is the lad wore the Tipperary hat."

When The Cartender had helped Tom wash and dress his slight wound at the sink, and they had—with the help of voluble explanations from the men who crowded round—made up their minds how the cloth had checked the small caliber bullet's progress, Tom shook his head at half a dozen proffers of whiskey and went to his bunk. He sat down on the edge; The Cartender stood beside him.

"Ye're sick a bit?" the latter asked.

Tom shook his head. "I think I'll lave," he said.

The Cartender stared at him. "Did ye hear phwat The Ould Man said?" demanded Tom. The Cartender laughed. "Oh, Gun-nysack," said he. "That is his way. 'Tis when he likes ye best he hands ye a lick wit the rough edge of his tongue. Don't mind him."

The heading boss came from his office and wanted to hear the story. The crowd who had followed the Slavs and their escort to the

depot began to filter in during the recital. They jammed round, listening. Jerry Morley and The Gunner were there, and Kennedy, The Dynamiter, with his hard face seamed with lines of violence.

"Wan man against the 'five," said the little Gunner, squinting round at the circle which pressed behind him. "That was fightin', Byes."

They growled their admiration and swore. Then they gathered in knots, discussing the shooting and the Slavs. Some of the Cœur d'Aleners began to advocate driving the Polish element out of camp, lynching one or two for luck. The heading boss heard the talk. He went to the door and placed his back against it.

"Now," he ordered, "get to yer bunks, and them that does not belong here get out. There'll be no more trouble in this place." He stopped one or two of his own drill runners trying to leave. "No downtown goes to-night," said he. "If ye try ut, I'll send fer The Old Man." They grumbled at first, and some of the Cœur d'Aleners began talking loudly of their rights. This got on the nerves

of Jerry Morley and a few of the older hard rock men. "Who are you?" they demanded; "to be tryin to run this camp? Wait till ye're warm in yer jobs first."

When the janitor was turning out the lights, the heading boss returned to Tom's bunk. "Are ye goin' to work in the marnin'?" he asked. Tom nodded. "I'm alright," he said. "Come inside," said the heading boss; "I'll put ye to helpin'; we're short av men."

Jerry Morley and The Gunner heard it, as they were passing by. "Give him to me," said the latter. "My helper's drunk and I shud be able to larn this wan somethin'."

"Ye're in luck," said The Cartender, when they had gone. "The Gunner is the best runner on the job."

In his cottage on the hill, The Old Man told the story to his wife. They were in the lace-curtained little parlor, a room resplendent with a brussels carpet, velvet-upholstered furniture and oleograph pictures. Mrs. Ryan listened to it, and Nora, hearkening in the doorway, recognized from her father's description the uncouth Irishman in the queer high hat, whose

angry eyes had affronted her at the depot. In Ryan's tale of one man against five—the one in peril of his life—there was something that made her catch her breath.

CHAPTER VIII

AT a quarter before eight the next morning the shift gathered on the blacksmith shop platform by the tunnel portal. The heading boss looked them over thoughtfully and felt good-natured as he realized that the majority of them were there. They crowded the platform, big-framed men, in black oilskins, black squam hats and rubber boots. Behind them the blacksmith pulled his bellows, and the red light of his forge flared out through the wide doors on their rough faces. In front of them, across the narrow-gauge track, the power house hummed droningly and the big dynamos spat blue glare through the many-paned windows. It spread over them weirdly. In these flickering lights they stood, somber-garmented, gigantic. Hard by the tunnel's black mouth yawned.

Most of them were muckers, heavy-footed, heavy-faced. Standing apart from this somber majority, the drill runners gathered by

the shop door. In stature they were the largest of the crowd; their faces were alight with recklessness. As they talked, some of them puffed at short-stemmed briar pipes; others bit deeply into plugs of black tobacco and spat wantonly. Their laughter boomed. At intervals one raised his head to curse, and the oath hurtled from his lips like a missile. They talked apart from the crowd, like aristocracy. Only their helpers mingled with them. They jested roughly.

The muck train emerged from the mountain and stopped for the unloading of dull steel. A nipper boy threw the muddy drills to the platform. The short lengths clanged on the planks. He busied himself with the longer pieces and began raising a fourteen-foot drill slowly in his hands, upending it. The uppermost tip touched the trolley wire and the heavy current struck him like a giant's fist. He fell back, clear of the car, upon the platform. The drill-runners roared laughter. They slapped their heavy thighs and clapped one another's backs in terrific mirth. The boy picked himself up slowly and rubbed his body thoughtfully with his hands; then limped back

to his work, cursing them over his shoulder.

Four of the Cœur d'Aleners were in the group of drill runners. They hung together, their mace-like chuck wrenches in their hands, talking loudly, more wantonly than any of the others. The Dynamiter was one of them. In his black oilskins, Kennedy loomed big; beneath his squam hat, his seamed face showed, with the perpetual frown between the bleared, gray eyes. Jerry Morley and The Gunner stood near him. At The Gunner's heels walked Tom, bigger than any of those about save Kennedy. He was listening eagerly to the talk, looking at the faces. And with the instinctive reaching out for first impressions which a man does among new surroundings, he noted that the Cœur d'Aleners showed savage among these reckless men; almost sinister.

The Gunner gave him a long-handled monkey wrench. "Hang onto this," he ordered, "and don't let anywan get ut from ye when ye're not lookin'."

"Got a new helper, Gunner?" It was Kennedy. Looking into the bleared eyes, Tom saw the scowl between them deepen as The Dynamiter tried to smile. "Were ye lookin'

fer the greenest ye could get?" he continued. The Gunner ignored him. Already rivalry had arisen between the older runners of Snowslide, the men of the public works, and these new comers from the mines, who had shown at once ability to handle the rock and proneness toward making trouble. He turned to Tom. "Come wit me to the machine shop," he said. "I want to show ye somethin'."

In the machine shop the little man took a burley drill, sent out for repairs, and bent over it. "This," he said, "is a slugger; what we use in the heading." He pointed out the different parts and named them. He made Tom repeat every name after him. "Now, mind," he ordered, "what I've showed ye. Some day we'll come here and I'll take wan to pieces and show ye the innards of her."

Outside, the shift boss was ordering them aboard the train. "Ye're green, Lad," said The Gunner, squinting upward into Tom's face, as they went to join the others. "But ye'll larn. Pay no heed to them about ye, but listen to what I tell ye."

They climbed into a car, and as the train lurched forward, Big Jerry bent toward Tom.

His voice boomed above the roaring of the wheels. He jerked his thumb toward The Gunner. "Mind what that little divil tells ye," he cried. "He's the best runner on the work." Abruptly, so that it obliterated him in the midst of a gesture, the tunnel's blackness closed around them.

They were in complete darkness, roaring through a damp cavern, whose walls gave back hollow echoings; whose air swept by them, touching their cheeks, dank like the air of a cellar. Drops from the roof fell upon them. When they had ridden thus for a few moments, Tom saw points of light ahead. An incandescent glowed from the roof; then others, and he watched the plumb-posts on the side of the tunnel, a swift procession of shadowed columns, passing endlessly toward the portal. The train stopped with a jerk and they climbed out.

They were in front of a huge framework of heavy timbers. From the top of this, and from beneath it, a crowd of men came toward them, the shift whose places they were to take. They jostled by; their faces were black with oil and muck; their oilskins gleamed in the

lamplight. One of them called to The Gunner; and while the two stood talking, the others went on, leaving Tom listening. There was an interval of heavy silence; then from ahead came a series of thunderous sounds, which swelled and blended in a reverberating chorus. The attack on the mountain had been resumed; the drills were at their work.

The Gunner finished his conference with the drill runner whose machine he was to take, and beckoned Tom to follow him. They climbed up a ladder to the top of the timbered platform. It was half way between the floor and the roof of the tunnel. The Gunner placed his mouth near Tom's ear. "This," he shouted, and the words came faint, diminished by the noises about them, "is the jumbo."

Tom looked around. Ahead of them a ledge of rock rose from the floor of the tunnel to the same level as that on which they stood. From the jumbo to the top of this ledge stretched a heavy gang plank; it was now crowded with a line of men wheeling muck in barrows. As these men gained the jumbo, they dumped the rock through chutes into cars that stood beneath. The Gunner

pointed to the ledge. At its foot muckers toiled; on its summit six tripod drills, swaying and trembling as their steel beat in the rock beneath them, united their iron voices in terrific volley, like a battery of rapid-fire guns. On each tripod stood a black-clad runner, his right hand on the crank, his left hand on the valve key. Beneath, among the tripods' legs, the helpers bent their backs in toil. The Gunner turned his face upward, as though to impart a secret. "The bench," he shouted.

Ahead of the bench the place stretched fifty feet. The timbers ceased a little way beyond the jumbo and this end of the tunnel was a cavern, rock-walled, rock-roofed. On the roof, hung by its projections and by wooden pegs, a string of incandescent lamps gave yellow light. Beneath them now the line of wheelbarrows was passing toward the heading. They stopped at a heap of broken rock that rose within a few feet of the ceiling and shut out view of all beyond. From behind it came a mighty roar, deep, pulsating. It rose above the noises of the bench machines and overwhelmed them. It made the air shudder, and

the very rock seemed to shake before it. It was the beat of the sluggers upon the heading's breast. To this place The Gunner hastened, Tom behind him.

Passing between the drills on the summit of the bench, Tom saw the nearest runner on his rocking tripod, wreathed with mist of spent air from the exhaust, his huge body shaking with the jarring of the iron beneath him. The machine was running unevenly, bucking like a fractious horse. The man's face was placid, absorbed, as though he were listening to the noises.

A helper hurried by, dragging a wire-bound air-hose. The coils caught on a rock; the man's mouth opened and his lips writhed, shaping curses; the cords of his neck swelled before the vocal effort; the oaths died soundless as they left his teeth.

The line of muckers was passing down the gangway again, with their laden barrows. Always the crowd of laborers was sweating at the foot of the bench, shoveling away its broken rock. Everywhere men were crowding motion into small space and steel was

smiting stone. 'Above it all came that deep thunder from behind the rock heap, forty feet away.

They reached the place. 'At the base of the muck-heap men toiled with short-handled shovels; over its summit black air-hose wound like snakes. From behind it came the slug-gers' pulsing roar. They clambered to the top.

Ten feet ahead of them the tunnel ended. The interval was a narrow chamber, rock-floored, rock-roofed; on three sides walls of rock, on the fourth the muckheap. In this small space four iron columns stood side by side; on each column were two great air drills. They were horizontal, like cannon, eight thundering engines bombarding the heading's breast—the slug-gers.

The columns were four feet apart; between the upper and lower machines were three-foot intervals. They jammed the narrow space. In short, swift strokes, the drills plunged forward and receded ceaselessly, always turning. The air valves spat cold, gray fog. It hung in a thick cloud. In the mist Tom saw the

helpers bend and crouch among the whirling chucks, that touched their fluttering garments, while the muck spouted on them from the driven holes and the valves spat black oil and ice fragments into their sweating faces. And he saw the runners, one at each slugger's crank, his face intent, as though he were listening to catch the harmonies of the titanic iron chorus, his eyes set forward, like the eyes of a gunner directing a rapid-fire cannon. On the low roof, among the column-tops, a cluster of incandescent lamps glowed through the fog, casting shadows and high lights upon the whole.

Crouching on the top of the muck-pile, Tom felt the touch of The Gunner's elbow and saw the little man upraise his puckered face. He bent his head. "Phwat I want I sign fer wit me hands; watch there, now."

Following the gesture, Tom saw Big Jerry at the crank of an inside machine, move his free hand, as though he were pulling a lever. Immediately, the helper handed him a chuck wrench. Tom nodded comprehendingly. The Gunner brought his right hand before Tom's

face and twirled his fingers, as though he were turning a screw. "Monkey wrench," he screamed.

They descended into the shuddering chamber. The Gunner took the crank of the machine that hung beneath Big Jerry's. On the next column to the right, Tom saw The Dynamiter frowning ahead into the reek of fog and spatter of wet muck, his reckless face stern, as though he were in the thick of a battle. The Gunner whirled his crank until the drill sank to the bottom of the hole, whirled it back a few strokes, and twisted the valve key. The iron engine shook and the piston plunged slowly. The little man moved the valve key again and the piston slid more swiftly. He jerked it wide open and his slugger joined its thunder with the salvos of the others. He crouched, bent-backed, his legs half doubled—Three feet above him, Big Jerry's air drill trembled with its efforts. Twisting his head, he listened to the medley of crashing noises, picking from among them those of his machine, segregating these to see that each rang true.

Tom knelt at The Gunner's back. A storm

of sound waves beat upon his ears. Men touched him, leaping to heavy toil; a few feet from him they were beating steel on steel. He was in the center of a tempest of strivings, in the vortex of a maelstrom of tremendous effort. He half shrank.

Gradually the feeling went from him. The sounds ceased to oppress. He began to distinguish some of their components, and to see purpose in the swift movements about him. As this came, he began to desire to move himself, to take some part in this reckless labor.

The Gunner twitched his air valve shut and crawled in beside his machine. Tom watched him as he freed the run-out steel and substituted a new one; then, at the little man's sign, he threw the old drill back over the muck-heap. After that he was idle again, occasionally doing some slight service; during the long intervals watching and listening.

When they were on the ten-foot steel, The Gunner bade him take the crank. He did so, and he felt all the forces trembling beneath his hand; he twirled it forward or checked its advance as the Gunner told him. Before he had done he had gotten some idea of the feeling

that tells how fast to feed the drill. Later in the day, he crawled between the working machines and extricated steel. He was fascinated now by the heavy excitements; he had forgotten that there was any danger.

In the afternoon they finished the round, and he helped The Gunner tear down the machine. He watched the other runners and their helpers loading their sluggers into wheelbarrows, or bearing them laboriously away, one man at the crank, the other at the chuck. When theirs was ready, he signed The Gunner to stand off, and he took the mass of iron on his shoulder. He strode down the narrow gangway to the jumbo, erect, moving easily. Men stared at him as he passed. "Strong as a mule," Big Jerry shouted, when he returned to the heading. The others laughed, save Kennedy, whose lip ends drooped downward in something like a sneer.

"What's wrong wit him?" Tom asked The Cartender that night.

"He knows The Gunner an' Big Jerry has no time fer him an' his gang," said The Cartender. "Like as not ut's made him sore at ye."

CHAPTER IX

"YE'RE gettin' tough," The Cartender said one evening, a few weeks later.

Tom grinned; he rather liked the accusation. He was working on "graveyard" now, the shift that goes on at midnight and does not come out until morning, and Tom had fallen into the habit of loafing for an hour or two in the white sunlight before he went to sleep, often walking down on the dump to talk with his broad-faced friend. He had done so this morning, and while they talked he had bitten into a plug of black tobacco, provoking the remark.

He had learned the habit from the men about him—eagerly as he had learned many other things. For they were to him ideals—these hard-faced men, who toiled recklessly, where the sluggers thundered in the forefront of the advance against the mountain. Every day, as they went to work, he stood near their little circle on the blacksmith shop platform

and listened to their talk. And in the hours of leisure he often hung around the bunk-house stove, hearkening to them while they "drove tunnel," absorbing their stories of toil and death and wild debauch. The desire to learn, instinctive within him, born of the larger instincts that made him hungry to be of the men and of the place, reached out these days to seize new things. He metamorphosed rapidly.

The manner of his speaking was first to change. The tongue of the men of Snowslide was of mongrel origin, for the most part Irish-American. It was rich in oaths; slang born of the work lent it vigor. Fundamentally, it was a language of terse expression. Tom acquired it quickly; he picked up its idioms, its oaths. He learned to swear and his voice took on depth.

Gradually, his bearing was changing with his speech. The eagerness born of newness was leaving him, to be replaced by recklessness. The work was the biggest factor in this change. The tunnel was a place of huge, rapid action. They drove the hole into the mountain with utter lack of deliberation, work-

ing swiftly for progress. When the most eager miners would have stopped to wait for timbers, they went on ahead and dared the shaking roof to crash down upon them. The drill runners drove their machines to finish each round of holes as soon as possible, racing to see who should get done first. The narrow space between the muck-pile and the heading's breast teemed with multiplied and heavy excitements; in it the simplest task was pregnant with possibilities of danger; performance of ordinary duties demanded absence of all reflection.

In this place Tom learned to worm his way between the plunging chucks, with the frozen breath of the exhausts coughing against his cheeks, and he liked it. He liked the chaos of sound that shook the rock about him. He handled steel and saw it crush the granite, and when they shot he carried giant powder to Big Jerry and The Gunner and helped them whittle it for the insertion of exploders. After the shot had pulled he was always at The Gunner's heels, among the first to enter the heading, reeking now with nitro gases that made the blood pound madly through his veins.

Gradually he was acquiring knowledge. Watching the men about him and listening to The Gunner's counselings, he came to know the sounds that rang true and the sounds that spelled trouble; to know by the crank's feeling what was going on in the hidden depths of the granite, where his plunging steel was biting its way.

With the knowledge was coming greater daring. The race on his shift was a grim one. The Cœur d'Aleners and the hard rock men made up equal proportions of the men in the heading; each element had one side of the chamber. Every day they toiled desperately to see which side should finish first. Big Jerry and The Gunner were by far the ablest runners on their side. Kennedy was most skilful of his men. Thus thrown into the thick of the striving for prestige, Tom became imbued with the spirit of the place, a spirit which demands lack of any recking.

And so he grew to rather seeking than avoiding danger. His mind was always on the tunnel, on rock and steel and rending dynamite, until learning them better, it had gotten something of their hardness and violence. He

swaggered slowly as he walked; he looked men boldly in the eyes.

Another month passed and they went on afternoon shift. He had his mornings to himself. But he did not spend so much time as he had planned with The Cartender. He had found new friends. Big Jerry and The Gunner were closest of these. With these two, he sometimes visited the town, the row of flimsy board buildings, whose flamboyant signs were always fluttering in the wind. He drank across the unpainted bars and watched the others drinking, no longer wondering at what he saw, looking at it with steady eyes.

Pay day night he was on his way to the dance halls, when he met The Cartender, who looked at him curiously and repeated his comment of a few weeks before. "Ye're gettin' tough," The Cartender said dispassionately.

"The hell I am," said Tom.

"They tell me," said The Cartender, "Ye rowed wit Big Kennedy in the headin' to-day an' told the boss to go to hell when he stopped ye."

"'Twas Kennedy told him that," said Tom; "not me. 'And 'twas no row. He'd tuk me

chuck wrench and whin I got ut back he wanted throuble."

"Your chuck wrench," said The Cartender. "Humph! Annywan wud think ye had a machine av yer own."

"So I have," said Tom. "The boss give me wan to-day. Come on; we'll have a drink on the strenth av ut."

The Cartender grinned. "I said ye was gettin' tough," he reiterated. Tom swaggered slowly beside him down the dump. When they reached the first saloon he slapped his money on the bar top and called Big Jerry and The Gunner to join him. They clapped him on the back and swore at his good luck. They told him he could run a machine with any of them. They bade him drink with them. It was an hour later when The Cartender got him to leave.

"'Tis not the dhrink," Tom remonstrated. "I want to see thot Dynamiter, Kinney. He's been sayin' he is the betther man av us."

"Never mind Kennedy," said The Cartender. "Leave that be fer the headin'. He may show ye things there yet. Come wit me now; I want to go to the post-office."

CHAPTER X

"THE DOCTOR" was a tall man, dark-eyed, with a good figure and rather handsome face. The face was marked by a bottle-nose. This distinguishing feature had been slowly and carefully developed by its owner, who was rather proud of it than otherwise. To him it suggested associations like an honorable scar. It was a perpetual reminder of past victories. For The Doctor cherished the tradition that a gentleman must be a man of hard head—"A good drinking man," was the way he put it. During the years he had spent in following the railroad's progress this idea had strengthened, until he had come to a point where he used an alcoholic test on his acquaintances and abided by its result in determining their proper position in life. He carefully scanned every man who roused his interest; then tried him out with Scotch whiskey of a special brand, which he imported by the case. After the candidate

for friendship had undergone this process he was always spoken of by The Doctor with a varying degree of warmth as: merely, "A drinking man," "A good drinking man," or—this last in rare instances, and always pronounced admiringly—"An excellent drinking man." A very few, whose talents or accomplishments in other lines of life made up for their shortcomings over the bottle, he retained, but always shook his head a little sadly when he mentioned their names.

The tests were always conducted in The Doctor's little parlor, back of the store. Like initiations to certain secret fraternities, they were always carried out as the result of invitations from the initiator. The novice was never apprised of the ordeal's approach. He found himself some day asked to sit down and have a chat; and then he saw the bottle and the glasses placed before him. After that it was a case of temperament and physical endurance. As soon as he showed the first symptoms of succumbing he found himself dismissed most courteously; the test had been completed; he was listed in his category. He departed, The Doctor bidding him hospitable farewell and at

the same time making the new mental entry in his classified blue book.

In this manner many men had drunk beneath The Doctor's watchful eye, he keeping pace religiously beside them, glass for glass. He was almost as democratic as the bestowers of the Victoria Cross. One or two bench and heading bosses had high places on his roll. On the other hand, the resident engineer, who had left the drug store a little uncertainly one evening, remained thenceforth among those who were never again invited into the sanctum; and this in spite of the fact that he was the one man on the work to whose word the superintendent had to give heed. It was whispered that there were men now high in the general offices in St. Paul who still boasted of the manner in which, during days of the road's construction, they had emerged from The Doctor's sitting room.

The payday on which Tom got his first machine remained memorable with several people. On that day The Old Man underwent initiation. Ryan had been in Snowslide more than a year and he had never been invited to the test before. The importance of

his position and the aggressiveness of his personality had made The Doctor slow to act. This thing was too grave to undertake in any hasty spirit. He had waited, and waiting he had come to close acquaintance with The Old Man, who had visited the post office nearly every day of his life. With anyone else this acquaintance would have long since become friendship, but The Doctor had reserve. He studied Ryan, almost gloating in the anticipation of what was to come. This afternoon he decided that the time was auspicious.

It was raining outside, a mountain rain, fitful wet gusts with intervals of quiet clearness. The Old Man carried his umbrella; it was a silk umbrella with an ornate gold handle whose heavy knob was known by almost everyone in camp. Ryan stood it in a corner when The Doctor conducted him into the little parlor. He sat down and watched the bringing forth of the bottle and the glasses. "Hell," he said in a dismayed tone, "my wife's lukkin' fer me back in the half hour."

The Doctor smiled—there was something inexorable in the smile—he had heard similar protests before. The Old Man read the look

and knew what lay ahead of him. He rose and removed his overcoat; he laid it carefully over the back of a chair; sat down and sighed heavily. The Doctor raised his eyes.

"There's some things," explained The Old Man, "ye don't want to take wit a run and a jump. Best go to this serious, like a man does a day's work takin' his dinner bucket along."

The Doctor smiled at the tribute and filled the glasses.

"I just come from The Roadmaster's private car," said Ryan tentatively. "He was up on the sidin'. We had a few bottles av beer together. I misdoubt but—"

"A good drinkin' man," said The Doctor impressively, "never lets a little thing like beer disturb his mind." He raised his glass.

There was a glint of fire in The Old Man's eye as he raised his own. "Here's how!" he said.

It was more than two hours later when Ryan and The Doctor rose from their chairs. "Me elbow," said the former, "is lame wit crookin' ut." The Doctor gazed at him admiringly and shook his head. "You are a wonder, Mr. Ryan," he said slowly.

The Old Man struggled into his overcoat and picked up his hat. Of a sudden he changed color. "My wife," he said, "I'd clean fergot; I must be goin'."

Half way up the dump it occurred to him that he had forgotten his umbrella. He halted to retrace his steps; then changed his mind. "I'd best be gettin' home now," he muttered, "and have a bite av supper." He hurried to the house and found it empty.

In the little parlor The Doctor rubbed his hands and thought of Ryan. "My word," he said, "what a head!" His own head rang a little; it was the first time in many years. The more he thought of it the more his admiration grew. His eye lit on the umbrella by the door. He chuckled; that was the only sign of weakness he had discovered. He took the umbrella and placed it on the counter determining to send it to The Old Man by the first drill runner who might come in. Then he busied himself sorting the mail for the eastbound train. As he worked he hummed a song that he had heard in a music hall twenty years before. It was a catchy song—not too polite.

He smiled frequently to himself—never had

there been a test like this. He grew enthusiastic thinking of it. He was in a mellow mood; a wave of good feeling toward mankind in general, had come over him; and details were of small importance. Outside the rain came on again. It whipped the windows angrily. The door opened and Snowslide Ann came in.

Like The Doctor, Snowslide Ann had followed the railroad many years. She had worked in every dance hall from the days of McCarthyville, when they were driving the tunnel through the summit of the Rockies. She had always been a good customer and the tradesman part of The Doctor liked her. The two had an impersonal acquaintance that had grown close with time. He looked around the little barrier of lock-boxes and saw her.

"Helloa Ann," he said. "My word, you're wet!"

She shook the rain from her flimsy gown. "Lend me this umbrella, Doc?" she asked.

"Certainly," he said and waved his hand, "with pleasure." Gesture and words were at once courtly and savoring of comradeship. She giggled.

"Thanks, awfully," said she.

"Don't mention it, Ann," replied the Doctor, "and, I say, see that I get it back as soon as possible, will you, please?" He went on sorting the mail, humming the impolite song as she departed.

Outside the door Snowslide Ann raised the umbrella. Her eyes fell on the ornate handle. "Gee!" she said, "that's swell." Carefully she grasped the handle well up so that the gold knob would be sure to show in all its splendor. She held it against the red gown and her eyes dwelt upon the combination of the two colors as she walked proudly past the restaurant and the grocery store. Looking thus with admiration fixed and pride swelling within her, she did not see the red-faced, broad-shouldered woman whose gaze was hardening on the big knob. The two of them would have collided had not Mrs. Ryan somewhat elaborately drawn aside, holding her skirts close to her.

When she had passed Snowslide Ann, Mrs. Ryan turned and stared at woman and umbrella. Then she spoke to the girl beside her. "Come Nora," she said through tightened lips, "we'll be going home. If your father's not there now, we'll wait for him."

An hour later when Snowslide Ann sent the umbrella back to the postoffice, The Doctor was talking to Tom and The Cartender, who had just come in. He looked up a trifle disturbed, as he took it and turned to Tom, "Mr. Morton," he said, "would you mind doing me a favor?"

"I will that," said Tom. The Doctor handed him the umbrella. "Just take this to Ryan's house," said he, "and give it to him with my compliments." When Tom had gone he sighed relief. "I'm glad he didn't come back after it while she was gone with it," he reflected.

On the front porch of Ryan's cottage Tom stood for a brief moment, waiting for the answer to his knock, The Cartender beside him. Nora opened the door and her eyes lit upon the umbrella handle in Tom's grasp. They went to Tom and her face grew very cold. Tom caught the look. His hand had gone to his squam hat; it lingered there awkwardly while he began to deliver the message. "I brought ut," he was saying, "fer—." A heavier foot than Nora's sounded in the doorway and Mrs. Ryan pushed her daughter

aside. She said nothing; her face was very red. She reached out and snatched the umbrella from Tom's hand. Then she slammed the door.

For a moment Tom stood staring at the closed door. He turned to The Cartender and saw him staring too, open mouthed. He wheeled and walked away, The Cartender at his heels. The latter was first to speak.

"I wonder," he said slowly, "what was wrong?"

"Wrong," growled Tom, "there's nawthin' wrong. They think they're too good fer the loikes av us; that's all."

CHAPTER XI

IN the murky heading the runners cranked the roaring sluggers, elbow to elbow, knee to knee, as jockeys ride the last stretch of a close-run race. As jockeys urge their horses to a final bursting effort, they crowded the steel to its uttermost into the ringing granite. For the first man down was the best.

Always there was this rivalry, with prestige for the swift, and for him who fell behind too often, relegation to the tripods of the bench. And prestige spelt mastery as plainly in Snowslide as in other places. Until the advent of the Cœur d'Aleners, Big Jerry and The Gunner had always held the lead and the others had always looked up to them. Now that there were the two factions, the hard rock men and these exiled miners led by Kennedy, the race had come to be between The Dynamiter's machine and The Gunner's.

Tom had keenly felt the spirit of this race.

He had bent his back eight hours a day doing his part to help win it. And watching it he had studied each man's method. Toiling at The Gunner's beck, hearkening to his instructions, Tom had learned many things from the little one-eyed man. With his eyes on Kennedy he had seen also the deliberation of method, the absolute certainty before going ahead that characterizes the men of the mines. Like The Gunner, The Dynamiter had a knowledge of the rock that was almost uncanny, that made his fingers, as they touched the jarring crank, see for him into the granite where the hidden steel was plunging. Some of these methods of judgment Tom had gotten from him. It was only from the sides of his eyes that he had gotten them. For the rivalry between the factions was stern and often when Kennedy withdrew his steel from a clean hole, Tom saw his fierce eyes alight with quiet triumph glancing at The Gunner still busy on a twelve-foot length. They had no speech together, only these sidelong looks of triumph or contempt.

The morning after payday Tom entered the heading to find a change. The Gunner

and Jerry were not there. Tarrying downtown with them in the dance halls were the two other runners on their side. Taking the place of these, Tom saw men from the bench, unaccustomed to the sterner conditions of the heading and its heavier machines. The shift was finishing the setting up, and there was no tumult of sound to drown their words. Kennedy in the midst of his Cœur d'Alenens was able to make himself heard plainly as he growled, "It's up to us to do what runnin's done, byes." He looked at Tom as he said it and smiled unpleasantly.

For all the anger that flared within him, Tom felt as a boy feels, learning to swim, when the hand beneath his body has been suddenly withdrawn, and he finds himself floundering alone. As he busied himself bolting up his machine, then pointing it, he realized how easy working at another's command had been; how heavy was decision. He realized it many times that day with a raw helper always looking to him for orders, often failing to comprehend them. And he had a hopeless feeling long before Kennedy ran down his last steel grinning at him in open derision.

It was a full half hour later when he finished his.

The Cœur d'Aleners loaded the round whenever that duty fell to the day shift now. Usually they began it while one or two of the hard rock contingent were still sweating to tear down their machines. There was no racing now. The month went on; Big Jerry and The Gunner did not come back. The former drifted to another shift, the latter took the place of the bench boss who had been injured by a falling rock, and Tom saw him only going out or coming in to work. The heading limped along unevenly. The Walker fell to coming in to hasten matters; he would stand behind the slower runners frowning at them between heavy brows, occasionally roaring curses that carried through the thunder of the sluggers. The thing became known through the camp; off the work men from other gangs gibed Tom and his companions. Tom said nothing to them, though the discrepancy between his machine and Kennedy's was greater than that between any other two. But he talked to The Gunner about it almost every evening, listening carefully to what the little

man told him. And he talked to his helper. Sometimes he stopped his drill to do it in the midst of the work.

Toward the end of the month a change began to come. The bench men had learned their business now and were crowding their steel along until they ran a close race with the Cœur d'Aleners. But Tom still lagged behind The Dynamiter and seemed content to let Kennedy win easily. The heading boss came to scowling as he looked at them. Then the month ended and they went on "graveyard."

The first night as they gathered in the shadows on the blacksmith shop platform, black-clad giants in the sombre place, Tom drew his helper aside, and whispered at length into his ear. The helper listened and at intervals he nodded earnestly. He had learned his business now. Kennedy saw it and laughed a sneering laugh. But when he reached the heading he lost no time in hurrying to the machine. And the others seemed to feel it for they watched the two men as they prepared to start.

It was shaky rock, full of slips and faults,

seams where the granite had rotted, streaming water. This is the hardest of running; it requires most careful judgment. Overhead the roof hung precariously. For two days huge masses had been peeling away, crashing down in spite of blocking. A half a dozen men had suffered injuries and several had leaped aside from the path of annihilation. In spite of the hour The Old Man was inside with The Walker looking at the timbering above the bench. The two of them stayed while the heading machines were starting. They came to the muckpile and sat upon its summit watching them.

There were only four machines running in the heading this night. Tom and The Dynamiter stood at the two inside ones, four feet apart. Each of them was at his hole's beginning. They stood, two broad-backed giants, the big shoulders of each bent slightly forward as he watched his helper, while the two helpers sprang upon the chucknuts and grunted, bending their bodies to the long-handled wrenches. Standing thus, one big hand on the idle crank, one on the valve key, the face of each was motionless, intent upon

the helper. Each held his lips tight shut, his head thrust slightly forward upon the corded neck. About them the other sluggers beat huge diapasons. Thick drops fell on them from the sweating roof. The fog of the spent air mantled their black-clad bodies. Oil blackened their faces; it gleamed beneath the incandescents upon their cheeks.

The two helpers sprang back. The two arms whirled the easing cranks. The hands twitched at the valve keys. The sluggers muttered sullenly like ugly animals of iron and beat the granite in slow strokes. The hands upon the valve keys twitched again. The mutter loudened and the blows increased. Again the twitching of the big hands and the drills roared, tearing their way into the heading's breast.

"It seems to me I know the face of him," The Old Man cried into Tarpy's ear. "Who is that Mick, Jack?"

"Gunner Flynn's old helper," shouted The Walker. "The wan that licked them Polacks."

The Old Man nodded and shifted his eyes to the roof. At once he nudged The Walker with his elbow and pointed upward. A mass

of rock had loosened; the seam showed where it hung, a suspended menace. It might fall the next minute; it might endure for hours. Tarpy saw and called the heading boss.

Tom and Kennedy were on their four-foot steel when the heading boss stepped between them and touched each of them on the shoulder. With him were two laborers who bore a huge, thick post. Both runners followed the foreman's gesture and glanced at the roof. The suspended rock was fair above them. Whether it would fall—if it fell—between them or upon them both, was an open question. Their eyes lingered briefly upon it and grew scornful. They turned to the heading boss and The Old Man saw them arguing; The Dynamiter clenched his fist and shook it in the foreman's face.

"What's this?" Ryan shouted.

The heading boss came over to The Walker. "They will not stop," he cried, and the thunder of the two machines, starting in unison, drowned the rest of his sentence. He raised his voice: "They're afther seein' who is best man," he shouted.

"Oho," cried Ryan. "Go to it then, ye div-

ils!" he yelled at the two broad backs. "Let's stay and watch ut," he called in Tarpy's ear.

The Walker laughed. "A merry race," he cried, and jerked his thumb at the impending roof. "Let the best win."

Tom nor Kennedy looked around. Their eyes were straight ahead. They were running neck and neck; and a moment later both helpers ducked in together to withdraw the four-foot drills and clamp the six-foot steel in the resting chucks. Together they slipped back and the two sluggers again began their crashing song. Half way down this length Kennedy withdrew his drill and slipped an iron nut into the hole. In this manner a runner makes his steel bite into the face of the rock where it is parted by a seam. The interruption gave Tom a marked advantage. He was well down toward the end of the six foot when Kennedy began again. But a moment later he stopped his machine and did as The Dynamiter had done.

"Hell," shouted Ryan, "the rock is stayin' even wit them." He whipped a look at the roof and the exultation faded from his face; it became very grave. The hanging mass had

separated a hair's breadth from the rock that held it, a barely perceptible interval had begun to show. Even as he looked it seemed to widen a little. He nudged Tarpy.

"Lave them be," The Walker called back; "they'd fight the man that touched either av them; lave them run ut out or go to hell as they please." Ryan shook his head but he made no answer. After that he watched the patch of shaky roof as much as he did the two men beneath it—as though the mass of rock were a third contestant in the race.

On the eight-foot length Kennedy forged ahead. He was running in even hard rock and he cranked her down as fast as the steel would bite its way. Tom's drill, hampered by some soft ground, was progressing haltingly and he lost precious time nursing it along. On the ten-foot The Dynamiter struck a small fault which Tom did not find and they drew together again.

The Old Man bent to Tarpy's ear. "If that Mick don't beat this here mine wrecker," he cried, "I'll throw him aff the end of the dump in the marnin'." His face was aflame with excitement. Then he cast his eyes over-

head and became silent; he frowned uneasily.

Neither Tom nor Kennedy had looked anywhere save into the murk before them. They were holding their idle cranks now while the helpers clamped the twelve-foot steel and The Dynamiter for the first time let his eyes wander. He saw The Old Man staring at the ceiling. He laughed and spat; then touched Tom on the shoulder and pointed to the loosened rock. It hung as it had hung for some time beginning to peel away, ready to rend free at any moment and crash down upon them. Tom glanced at it then looked at The Dynamiter's face, cleft deep with scowling lines, black with oil, derisive. His eyes narrowed and without any other change of expression he turned to his machine.

A moment later they were pounding down the twelve-foot steel. Both machines were running fair and free to all appearances, swaying slowly, regularly from side to side with their even play when Tom shut off his air. His drill slowed in a midstroke and stopped. He touched his helper on the shoulder and gestured briefly with his right hand. The man crawled in beside the slugger—Kennedy's

chuck touched his loose oilskin coat as it tore its whirling way—and began loosening the nuts that held the drill.

“Green!” The Old Man shouted, “thinkin’ of slips when there is none. He’s beat now.”

“Wait a bit,” The Walker told him, “Gunner Flynn says the lad knows all he does. Be aisy.”

Tom was holding the drill by its flaring end, looking at the bit. He nodded to his helper; while the man got a fresh steel from the pile behind them Tom fumbled in his pocket and took out an iron nut. He crept forward and rammed this into the driven hole. The helper slipped in the new drill after it. Tom half-opened the air valve and let this one pound slowly against the piece of metal. He looked across at Kennedy and smiled. The Dynamiter was withdrawing his steel, run now to its full length. He met the slow, sure smile with a sneer.

A shower of loose particles fell from the hanging rock; it rattled down between them. Neither noticed it; or if they noticed, neither heeded.

While Kennedy was feeding the fourteen-

foot steel, Tom looked again. His own machine was running full speed on the last of the twelve. The Dynamiter's air valve had begun coughing irregularly. As Tom looked, the helper sprang forward, crouching, a bar of iron in his hand, and began beating upon the binding drill.

The Walker nudged Ryan, "What did I tell ye?" he cried, "he's struck that slip."

"Struck ut," growled Ryan to himself, "I think he's been on ut this five minutes witout knowin' ut. 'Tis that that hurry does."

"Stuck fast," he muttered a moment later.

Kennedy's machine was still. The Dynamiter was wrestling alongside his helper to free the drill from the hole in whose recesses it had wedged itself.

While the two men were still striving, Tom's helper tossed the last drill back over the muck-heap. And when Tom came back from the jumbo where he had borne his inert slugger, The Dynamiter closed his air valve for the releasing of the fourteen-foot length. He stepped aside just as the mass of granite crashed down where he had been.

"That," said Ryan to Tarpy on their way to

the portal, "is the last bit of foolishness I'll stand for. If ever ye see or hear of anny fool doing the likes again and don't fire him on the spot, I'll fire ye."

The Walker listened gravely, "'Twas wort' the watchin' annyhow," he said, "even if ut did keep us up till daylight."

CHAPTER XII

THAT was the winter for which Snowslide is best remembered. Old-time drill runners, "driving tunnel" around stoves of far-off camps still tell of it; the winter of the forty-foot drifts at the summit, of the pneumonia epidemic, the falling rock and the big free fight.

Gray clouds hung low among the hidden peaks and the air was heavy with flakes for days at a time. Trains stuck in foothill cuts and the camp was out of the world for long intervals. Chinook winds swept lazily inland and ate the snow in a night. Right after them came zero weather; and the damp air, suddenly congealed to sharpness, left sickness in the bunk-houses. It was the winter of which they tell when the carelessly buried dead appeared in the camp's little graveyard among the hemlocks on the mountain side at every thaw. Shaking rock masses peeled away from the

heading roof three times that winter, crushing men as they fell. A heading runner, mucking out after a shot, thrust his pickpoint into a stick of unexploded dynamite and vanished utterly taking half a dozen others with him. A sombre gray winter of fatalities, and there was no sun.

It was a winter of restlessness and disorganization. Men growled over the quality of the food and quit good jobs for no tangible reason. The lust for moving on—the curse of the hard rock men, the necessary affliction that made them ready to go anywhere where progress called for labor—descended upon many. Twenty drill runners disappeared one payday and it was three months before the first of them came drifting back. By bunkhouse stoves these prodigals told of work in sunny California, of work in Alaska, where wages ran to eight and ten dollars a day, and of work at Galveston where gulf breezes had fanned their cheeks. The tales made their auditors restless. Rumors of other jobs were spreading constantly and getting serious discussion; jobs in far places, inviting because the distance was great; jobs with fabulous

wages magnified by those who discoursed upon them.

Tom heard the talk; he listened to it many evenings. It made something stir within him, something which he did not understand, a vague blood movement that kept him restless nights and roused dissatisfaction when he was at work. He wanted to go somewhere else; he had been here too long. Twice when he drew his check it was only the accident of snowbound trains that held him to the camp.

That winter Jerry Morley got a shift of hard-fisted, reckless runners and left the job with the most of them to loaf for weeks in the Gem dance hall, until they gave the place so hard a name that Jack Tarpy, The Walker, led a storming party to drive the revellers back to work. In Mexican deserts and beneath the shadows of Alaskan glaciers they sing epics of that fight to-day. It was the big payday, the one that came two weeks late because of delayed trains.

Other paydayes stood out in 'Snowslide's' history; above them all the one in March of that year. The hemlock forests were black below the glistening summits that afternoon. In

the canyon soggy drifts had grown dull gray. The breeze from seaboard carried damp warmth. It was heavy with that mournful laziness of air that makes the blood stir in the veins and brings memories of places which one has never seen. In the darkening afternoon it sighed among the hemlocks, and the shift emerging from the tunnel's depths stared vaguely off into the whispering branches above the gray snow. One or two of the men halted and lifted their faces, snuffing as horses smell the air.

They were big men, strong with the animal within them. They were close to the earth. It moved them subtly; they did not know how. This first touch of spring, lowering from dark, damp skies, fell over them and enwrapped them like a blanket. It was the call of grasses in their first stirring to uncurl beneath the snow, of unborn flowers, of fair skies still un-cleared; the summons of the season, that had always bidden their forbears, but little rougher and little hairier than themselves, to pick up their spears and wander. The earth called, and as the call reached them they became vaguely discontent.

Tom strode among them his big face to the breeze, his eye set far away. He was uneasy; the feeling that had come over him in the winter when he hearkened to the tales of other places, was with him now; that and something more. He walked in silence and suddenly he caught his breath without knowing why. The stirring air carried by a faint whiff of balsam. High overhead came the call of wild geese speeding northward.

There were sixty of the shift, walking together to the depot where their checks awaited them. And as each man left the station window he went straight toward the town. The Old Man, gossiping with The Doctor in the postoffice, heard the tramp of their passing feet and looked around at them. He knew them as they did not know themselves. He turned to The Doctor.

"There'll be hell to pay to-night," said he.

He was of their breed; his body had grown big living their life. He stepped to the door and the soft, warm breeze came to his nostrils. He sniffed it. Looking upward suddenly, "wild geese," he said. He stood there in the doorway while the men trooped by. "Hell to

pay," he repeated half to himself. The heavy air fanned his cheek carrying damp odors of the hidden earth. He looked in at The Doctor, "I'm goin' to stay downtown an' watch ut," he muttered.

The row of flimsy wooden buildings that comprised the town showed like a yellow scar against the gray snow. Before them the sidewalk shook to the tramp of heavy feet. Overhead the cloth signs billowed lazily and ragged streamers from their edges fluttered carelessly. Within the wide doors, the long rooms were filling. Groups of men talked noisily before the unpainted pine bars. The bartenders polished their glasses steadily, getting ready for the long night's work; they were beady-eyed men with hair plastered tight over their low foreheads. At the green-clothed tables the lead-faced gamblers ran their stacks of chips together between their long, white fingers, making a clicking noise; the sound came ceaselessly, suggestive of the chips that made it, alluring. In the rear where the raised floors extended back beneath acetylene lamps, knots of dance hall women were smoking cigarettes and laughing mirthlessly at nothing.

At the station window the last of the waiting line was melting before the agent's swift payments. He was a lean-faced man with hollow cheeks and lack-lustre eyes; he had nothing in common with the men whom he served; his world was far apart from theirs, along the message-laden wires that paralleled the track. He shoved each paper check through the window with an air of weary indifference. As he got his slip, the laborer stepped to one side, unfolded it, and departed, and another took his place. It was like machinery. Tom waited his turn among the last, his helper behind him. "Kennedy is drunk," the helper was saying, "he's been downtown since morning."

Tom nodded vaguely; he was thinking of other things. His mind was wandering to places that he had never seen, of which he had never heard. He felt the heaviness of his blood, the surcharged life within him, the accumulation of winter's storage of heat and strength. It pulsed in every vein; it made his limbs leaden like a laziness; it made him restless, demanding that it be unloaded. Far off in the forest male animals were moving through

the damp snow, rubbing their fur against the tree trunks, snuffing the heavy air, growling with the desire of the season to fight one another for their mates, preparing instinctively for their first wanderings. Tom felt a wave of disgust for the work, its steady monotony, for the black hole reverberating with noises, for the camp, the cook-house where he ate coarse food, the bunk-house where he slept between heavy blankets. He yawned and stretched his big arms wearily.

"Lookin' fer trouble," he heard the helper say.

He took his place at the window. "Who's lukkin' fer throuble?" he asked half irritably over his shoulder.

"Kennedy," said the helper eagerly, "I've been tellin' ye, he—."

Tom turned his check in his hand. "To hell wit Kennedy," he growled. "Lave him be."

He walked away alone, up the track. All winter he and Kennedy had run side by side, racing in the heading. Sometimes Tom had won and sometimes The Dynamiter. As the season had worn on the former had slowly forged ahead. Most often of late it had been

he who had torn down his machine first. And yet there remained open the question of superiority between them. The rivalry had not subsided; it had grown. They still toiled side by side, elbow close to elbow, never speaking, the eyes of each taking sidelong note of the other's progress. And there had grown—in-
evitably; born of the rivalry and the innate differences in these men, differences which made each antagonistic to the other—a deeper feeling. The men about them had seen this, and because these two were the biggest men in camp, the camp had come to know it. And now, knowing the thing that must come from it, the camp was waiting for this thing—the ultimate settlement of physical superiority, the testing of man against man, the fight.

But Tom was not thinking of Kennedy now. The camp lay ahead of him, the cluster of pine buildings, the bunk-house and the cook-house. He had a fixed idea of going there; he intended to put by all of this check; perhaps he might see some good chance calling him elsewhere this month. But the thought of these buildings revolted him; he was sick of them.

From the upper air came a wild, minor note;

a male brandt leading his flock northward was summoning the laggards where the widespread triangle flared. Tom halted in his tracks. The heavy breeze touched his cheeks in soft caress. Then he heard a burst of sound and he glanced whence it had come, toward the row of unpainted wooden buildings. In the post-office door he saw The Old Man gazing upward at the sky. He saw the crowd on the board sidewalk; from a wide-open door came a medley of noises, scuffling of many feet, tinkle of a piano, a shout of laughter. He watched the crowd before the bar staring at them as a detained schoolboy stares through the open window at his companions rioting on the playground. And suddenly the vague restlessness within him centered and became a longing. He shook his wide shoulders and turned his back upon the camp; he hurried whither the lure drew.

The Old Man and The Doctor were standing inside the postoffice door as he passed. They were talking eagerly; their words came to him. "Wait a half hour and I'll be with you," The Doctor was saying.

"We c'n get Smith an' Anderson," said The Old Man, "they'll be through runnin' them levels by that time."

"And have a little dinner in Dolan's restaurant," The Doctor said. "He can broil a steak; I've some wine back here. My wife's away."

"I wisht mine was," Tom heard The Old Man mutter.

The sidewalk before the dance halls was lined with the men of Snowslide. Many still wore the garb in which they had toiled, oil-skins, rubber boots and squam hats, the squam hats tilted back from their lined foreheads. They leaned against the sidewalk's rail, talking in groups; their laughter boomed; their faces were alight; recklessness blazed from them. Now and then a knot of them swaggered away together into one of the wide doors. Again one came forth from a saloon striding aggressively; another followed leaping, capering heavily in his rubber boots, whooping. Always from within came the babel of tongues, the click of the chips, the metallic beat of the pianos. Before the walk the gray snow was

littered with heaps of broken bottles; overhead the cloth signs billowed lazily; their ragged edges fluttering in the languorous breeze.

The Cartender burst from the line at the sidewalk's rail. He smote Tom's chest with his gnarled fist. His broad face was expanded to a laugh; his big features reeked with happiness. "Come on," he cried, "come on an' have a drink!" He struck Tom again and piled epithets upon him, endearing each appellation by the word "Old." "Where you been?" he demanded as though they had not seen each other for months. He repeated the question aggressively at intervals. They went together to Riley's dance hall. It was the rendezvous for the older drill runners, the hard rock men. Among them it was whispered that The Old Man had an interest in the place and so they clung to it.

Riley was behind the bar, at the end by the safe, cashing pay checks. As he got his money every man moved a few feet to one side and slapped some of it down, calling for a drink. Then the bartender, pushing forward the bottle, tossed the coin into the cash register; and the garnering back was begun.

Giving out the money, Riley smiled constantly, a non-committal smile. He was a big-waisted man, shrewd-eyed, imperturbable. Always he kept one eye roving between the bartender and the cash register. The Cartender introduced Tom to him and the three of them drank together. Then Riley pressed cigars upon them and insisted that they remain in the place. "Enjoy yourselves," he told them.

The Cartender tilted his cigar upward and puffed aggressively. Tom clenched his between his teeth, so that it slanted downward, and looked about the room. Already the heaviness was leaving his limbs; the vague uneasiness was departing before a fierce warmth. The liquor was beginning to work. He thrust his big hand into his pocket. "Let's have another," he said.

About them the hard-faced men of Snowslide were moving restlessly, like milling cattle, shouting, muttering, exploding oaths; the gamblers were droning their ceaseless invitation in sing-song monotone, clicking their celluloid chips in long accompaniment; on the raised dance floor the women were smoking, laughing drearily. He watched them, puff-

ing slowly at his cigar, listening gravely to The Cartender, now grown enthusiastic over small things.

"Kennedy's down to The Gem," said The Cartender finally. "He says he's goin' to hammer hell out o' ye."

Tom scowled. "'Tis aisy fer Kennedy to talk," he growled. "Lave him blow if he likes ut; I ain't huntin' throuble."

As they roamed around the room, many spoke to Tom; he seemed to be a center of attraction. Men with whom he had never had words hunted him out, and every one of them had something to say of The Dynamiter, some repetition of threats, for the most part wildly exaggerated. Although he responded to them lightly or not at all, Tom felt his anger rise, and he felt more definitely the grim antagonism that had grown during the winter. Finally, after an hour, he turned away irritably from two drill runners, who were harping on the subject. "Let's go eat," he said to The Cartender; "I'm hungry."

"Coming back?" Riley called to them, as they passed toward the door. They nodded and he resumed his placid demeanor, watching

the bartender's treatment of the cash register from the tail of his eye.

In the door they collided with Jack Tarpy. The Walker was hurrying in, as though he had been called on business. His face was set with determination. "Come an' watch me," he said; "I'm goin' to bust that crap game. I'll get back what ut's got from me. Come on!" They shook their heads. "We're aff to eat," said The Cartender.

"Come in when ye're tru," called Tarpy after them. "Ye'll find me here, gettin' that tinhorn's roll."

At Dolan's, Jerry Morley and The Gunner hailed them joyfully. "We lukked fer ye at The Gem," grinned Jerry. "Yer friend, The Dynamiter's there." The four of them sat together, midway down the room. In the rear they saw The Old Man and The Doctor, dining with two of the civil engineers. The table was resplendent with white linen and silver knives and forks. At its head The Doctor sat, white-collared, his loud-patterned tweeds neatly pressed; his manner was punctilious. The engineers were badgering him about some es-

capade in Spokane which they had invented. He smiled, half liking it. "Really now, gentlemen," he said. "My word! What rot! 'Absurd!'"

The Old Man drank his wine at a gulp and joined in the chaffing. His wit set them all into a roar of laughter.

"The Ould Divil," said Jerry. "He's billed fer a jamboree to-night. I know the signs."

The Gunner looked at Tom quizzically as they went out. "Want to go to The Gem?" he asked. Tom shook his head. "I'll hunt no throuble," he asserted. They followed him to Riley's.

The place was full now. Men stood in a long line before the bar; they danced on the raised platform with listless women, who smoked cigarettes as they waltzed; they moved restlessly about the middle of the room, hunting companions, hunting enemies, jostling one another, laughing, cursing. The pianos were thumping staccatto; the gamblers were droning their ceaseless sing-song invitations, clicking their stacks of chips. Through the wide doors the sounds went forth

where the flare of the acetylene lamps fell on the gray snow, hardening now to crispness in the clean, cold air of night.

Riley greeted them with his non-committal smile. They drank with him, and while they were raising their glasses, a man shouldered his way roughly among them, throwing a yellow-backed bill upon the bar. It was Jack Tarpy. His face was grim; hard lines crevassed it. He did not look at them. "Your dice is crooked," he cried to Riley. "I'll beat them yet." He burst into curses.

"Have a drink," said Riley calmly. The Walker gulped down the whiskey and stamped back to the crap table. They saw him there a half an hour later, bending over it as he threw the dice, watching them as they rolled, swearing at them, talking to them, as though they were alive and would obey him.

Late in the evening, The Old Man and The Doctor came, with them the two civil engineers. Riley gave them chairs behind the bar and they sat watching the crowd. The eyes of many went toward them. Then a nipper boy rushed in and shouted something excitedly. The Gunner turned to Tom. They were

standing at the bar's edge. "Kennedy is comin'," he said.

Outside sounded the heavy tramp of booted feet, and a dozen of the Cœur d'Aleners trooped in. The Dynamiter was among them; he loomed above them all. His deep-lined face was aflame with ferocity; his bleared eyes glinted beneath his frowning brows. The noises of the long room died.

CHAPTER XIII

THE Cœur d'Aleners advanced straight to the bar. The tramp of their booted feet was the only sound in the place. Rough voices stopped in mid-syllables; the piano halted on a high note; the women ceased dancing and stood, abandoned by their partners. Even the lead-faced gamblers dropped their shuffling chips. Every eye was on the invaders. They gained the bar and stood, backs to it, their faces toward the room. Twelve men, they held their places as though this were to be a stand against the crowd.

They were not popular. Good drill runners, each and all, they were of a strange breed; miners among hard rock men. Pariahs in the mountains whence they had come, black-listed by employers, feared by many of the working-men whose cause their violence had hurt, they had wandered here to find sidelong looks and rivalry. And they had met both boldly. Always they had hung together, a minor faction.

As they stood, shoulder to shoulder, their reckless eyes swept the silent room. Their lined faces, deeper lined this night from drink, challenged those on whom they looked. Then Kennedy moved toward Tom and the silence passed.

The crowd surged forward. Its center now, the point toward which its members were pressing, was the spot where these two giants stood side by side. Each of them was facing the bar; the elbow of each was touching the elbow of the other. And neither yielded ground. Kennedy slammed down a coin. "Give us a drink," he shouted. Behind their white obscuration his eyes shot fire.

Though The Dynamiter was pressing hard against him, Tom did not move. He was ignoring Kennedy elaborately—too elaborately; this could not last. The situation was pregnant; the fight was there, about to burst. It needed but one slight movement from either man, a single word of direct address. Kennedy prepared to speak that word. He tossed his liquor down his thick, corded throat and turned toward Tom, a sneer upon his lips. At the same moment The Doctor leaped to his

chair top. Standing on this eminence, he raised a thin, white hand. "Gentlemen!" he cried.

The eyes in the room went toward him. Tom and Kennedy raised their faces to stare at him. He stood straight, tall, high-collared, immaculate in his loud-patterned tweeds, his hand upraised. His voice was elaborately formal, as though this rough crowd were a polite audience. He paused a moment in this attitude and then:

"Gentlemen," he repeated, "in behalf of my friends, Mr. Ryan and Mr. Riley, I have a few words to say to you." Those who were near heard a muttered oath from The Old Man and saw The Doctor's hand sweep toward him in a silencing gesture as he continued in impressive tones. "In the first place, I have an invitation to deliver. I ask you, each and all, to take your places quietly at the bar and have a drink on me. And while you drink, gentlemen, I would ask Mr. Morton and Mr. Kennedy to step behind the bar. We have a word to say to them."

He paused. A babel rose, voices raised in exultation at the invitation; voices raised in

anger, outcries of disappointment. These last rose above the others. He heard them and raised his hand. "Just a moment," he cried loudly, and the silence fell again. "There will be a fight," he shouted. A whoop of joy rose from the room's four corners and the crowd shoved forward *en masse* upon the bar.

The Doctor bent down and whispered a word in Ryan's ear. The Old Man looked up in astonishment, then admiration, and then he beckoned imperiously to Tom and Kennedy. As they came he turned again to The Doctor. "Ye saved a merry free-fer-all," he said, "and nawthin' else wud." The Doctor's eyes were upon the two approaching giants. "Look at them!" he said. "My word! Think of the fight this will be!" He rubbed his hands.

The Old Man turned to Tom and Kennedy.

"Now," said he; "listen here, ye two to what I'm tellin' ye. Ye want to fight; there's no need to talk of that. And, annyhow, ye've got to fight. We're goin' to let ye do ut right, understand? We'll have no rough-house here. It's ye two fer ut. See? Stand up and knock down. I'll see fair play meself; and who fouts has me to deal wit. Get back now to yer

friends and shtrrip. We'll call ye when we want ye."

Big Jerry and The Gunner met Tom as he came from behind the bar. With them was The Cartender. His face was no longer wide with mirth; he looked anxious. "Doc. told us," said Big Jerry, "'tis London prize ring. Fine business!"

"Come on," ordered The Gunner, squinting abstractedly, as though he were thinking of many details, "back to the dance floor. Kennedy is sthrrippin' by the shtove. Ye c'n lick him to a frazzle." The Cartender followed them in silence as they went, his grave eyes fixed on Tom.

"Now," said The Gunner, as he unbuttoned Tom's shirt, "get to his shoes, Jerry. Listen to me, Lad. Ye're two av a build, but ye shud tear his block off, bein as the whiskey's got him years ago, and his wind has gone. All he has over ye is the science. This is London prize ring. That means stand up and fight fair; no bitin', gougin' or foul'in'. When ye knock him down ye get a rest—and not until. And ye cannot hit him when he's down. Understand?"

Tom nodded absently. He looked at Kennedy stripping by the stove, surrounded by his fellows, laughing with them; and then he saw The Cartender staring at him and he smiled. The Cartender smiled faintly back. "Stay wit ut," he said, as cheerfully as he knew how.

Down in the center of the room, The Old Man looked up from superintendence of half a dozen drill runners, who were roping off the ring. "Where's Jack Tarpy?" he cried. There was no answer. He repeated it and someone pointed to the crap table, deserted now by all save The Walker and the dealer. Ryan made the distance in two strides and returned, his hand in Tarpy's coat collar. "I thought I had yer promise that ye'd stay on the work this day," he was saying slowly. "Now, Mr. Tarpy; in the marnin' we make that trip to Leavenworth on the freight, me and ye, and ye sign the pledge fer wan year. Mind that. Here, get a half a dozen men at the ropes and keep back the crowd!"

A moment later The Gunner, hustling Tom into the ring, whispered into his ear. "Remember this," he said; "he's full of whiskey and has not the wind. Keep yer eye on his

eye always, and make him move round." Looking up he saw The Doctor, a gold watch in one hand, signal to Ryan with the other that the time was up. He bent his head close to Tom's again for the final word. "He's been tellin' all over town how he'll hammer hell out o' ye."

"Stand up," The Old Man's voice came sharply. Tom rose and saw The Dynamiter coming toward the center of the ring. He felt the push of The Gunner's hand and went to meet him. Ryan stepped between them. "Shake hands," he ordered. Their big palms met; their eyes were on the ground; it seemed as though they could not look into each other's faces and refrain from striking. The Old Man stood back; Tom found himself facing Kennedy. And then it came over him that he did not know how to fight.

It appalled him for an instant; the realization overwhelmed; all other things became as nothing. He could not fight! This was no rough and tumble mêlée in a bunk-house, this cold-blooded arrangement, where he must fight by rule. It made him feel uncertain. He stood, his big hands clenched at his sides, and

his eyes went to Kennedy. The Dynamiter was leaping toward him, swinging his huge fists. Tom raised his hands and Kennedy's fists shot forward, the left and then the right. The floor seemed to rise and strike him heavily.

He was up in an instant. He did not hear the roar from the crowd. He did not feel The Gunner's arms about his waist; the push of The Old Man's fist against his chest. He only felt the sting of a blow that had come full and fair upon his mouth, and the warm trickle of blood upon his lower lip. He was mad with it. They dragged him, struggling, to his seat.

"Aisy now, aisy aisy," he heard The Gunner saying finally. "Ye young fool, aisy and listen to me. Do ye hear me now?" Tom nodded and stopped struggling. He saw The Gunner's puckered face close to his, Big Jerry clinging to his legs, The Cartender gazing at him anxiously. He nodded again and turned to The Gunner. "How soon do I get at him?" he asked.

"Soon enough," growled the little man. "Listen, now, to me. Ye must kape yer head and watch him. Kape yer eye on his; right on his. Then ye see when he is going to hit.

Never take ut off. When he leads—when he strikes at ye—dodge ut wit yer head. Never mind yer belly; yer arms will take care av that. Kape clost to him; and, remember, hit him whenever ye can. That's what ye're there fer—to hit him. Do ut like ut was a day's work—like ye *had* to—”

“Time,” The Doctor called.

The Dynamiter was coming toward him, on the balls of his stockinged feet. He was poised, half crouching, stepping lightly, springing with bent knees, coming closer. His shoulders bent forward, ahead of his waist. His huge, knotted fists were moving constantly, rhythmically, swinging to and fro in front of him, advancing now, now retreating. And the great cabled muscles were slipping and writhing beneath his white skin like thick snakes. His face was set, deep-lined, ugly; the white-filmed eyes gleamed.

Instinctively, Tom raised his fists. A roar came from the crowd—the Cœur d'Aleners made its bulk—a roar of derision. Tom did not hear it; he was looking into Kennedy's eyes. They met, foot to foot, and at once he saw the eyes flash a message, the message of a

coming blow. Then he struck out with all the mad anger that was in him.

The movement brought a mighty change. His mind centered upon it, upon the fact that he was striking to reach a mark. And he became confident. He hardly felt the blow that crashed against his ribs. His own fist went wild, glancing from The Dynamiter's shoulder. He struck again, and again he failed to feel the punishment that he was getting. He only knew that he had hit.

The crowd was bellowing now, a deep-throated roar, the savage cry of savage men watching two fellows fight. The roar deepened, it swelled, the eyes of the room hardened and remained fixed upon these two, standing foot to foot, striking blow on blow, giving and taking; taking eagerly for the pleasure to give.

Thus they stood a full three minutes, raining blows. The sound of the bare, hard knuckles, striking naked flesh, came in regular, sharp punctuations of the roar about them. Their huge, bare bodies touched. Tom felt the sweating flesh of The Dynamiter's chest press his. He heard the gasp of its indrawn breath. And he struck. Suddenly he felt the shock

of Kennedy's fist against his cheek and he knew that he was falling. The Old Man was standing over him counting when his dazed senses came back. He saw the hand upraised above him and he scrambled to his feet. His head rang as he walked to his chair.

“That was fighting!” he heard someone say.

Big Jerry was throwing water on his body, rubbing him. The Gunner bent his head. “Ye’re sure to win,” he said. “He’s out of wind already. Lad, can ye wrastle?” Tom nodded. “Sure,” he said. “When ye get in clost,” whispered The Gunner, “grip him round the waist; grip him, but do not use yer legs to trip; trow him wit yer arms. And if ye cannot grip keep clost in and rough ut as ye did that time. Take all he gives ye fer the fun av givin’.”

“Time!” The Doctor’s face was very happy as he looked up from his watch.

This time Tom leaped to his feet. Kennedy was rushing toward him, a straight rush, with swinging fists. As The Dynamiter came close the great fists hurtled out. Tom ducked his head and they flew past. He closed beneath them and gripped the naked waist with both his

arms. For an instant the two men struggled desperately, locked in the embrace. Then Tom raised his arms with a mighty heave, and Kennedy swept through the air and crashed down on the floor.

The Dynamiter was breathing a little thickly when they approached each other at the beginning of the next round. He did not seem eager for the meeting. Tom ran in. As he closed, The Dynamiter stepped warily to one side; then whirled and struck with all his force. The blow went past Tom's face; he felt the breath of it. Catching himself in the middle of a stride, he turned and struck back viciously. Recovering his balance from the shock of Tom's fist, Kennedy drew in his arms. The two giants stood, again, foot to foot, their big fists swinging regularly. Suddenly Tom's arms flew out; they locked and Kennedy went down.

"Ye have him, now; ye have him," The Gunner whispered. "Kape ut up an' wear him down. Hit him whenever ye can an' niver lave him rest."

But Kennedy did not want rest now. He came into the center of the ring like an angered

bull. His scowling face was evil with rage; his heavy jaw was set. As he rushed, his fists swung out; and Tom, wise in the knowledge that he had gained, ducked beneath them, whirling round to strike back as they shot past. Kennedy caught himself as Tom's blow went home, and charged again. Again Tom avoided the rush, stepping to one side. He was cool now; his eyes were steady; and he fought as The Gunner had bade him, as though it were a day's work. He saw The Dynamiter's chest heave laboredly as he made a third onslaught; and suddenly, while Kennedy's arms were still outstretched, he leaped, driving his fist before him, down and inward, where the bare waist showed. The big body crumpled as the fist shot home and Tom struck again, a swinging blow, that met the jaw. Kennedy fell limply to the boards. The Old Man strode beside him and counted slowly. When he said "Ten," the roar of the crowd drowned everything.

Jerry and The Gunner fell upon Tom's shoulders. "Good boy," the little man cried. "I knew ye'd do ut."

"Ye hammered hell out of him," shouted Jerry. "He's not come to yet." They

dragged him through the jamming crowd and helped him don his clothes. As he was buttoning his shirt, he saw The Cartender standing before him. The Cartender's face was broad, radiant, reeking good nature. He was himself again.

The Doctor came and shook Tom by the hand. "My word!" he cried. "It *was* a fight; the best I ever saw, I think. A little more science, Mr. Morton, and you'll be a wonder." He looked at Tom's bulk. "What beef!" he murmured. "And the eye back of it! My word!"

The Old Man had delayed to catch The Walker. He came now with one hand twisted in Tarpy's sleeve. "'Twas a stem-winder," he said. "Jeffries himself couldn't of done better. We'll have a drink on ut now."

At the bar Jack Tarpy muttered something in Ryan's ear. The Old Man looked at him steadily. "Not you," he growled. "Ye get soda pop. Understand?"

CHAPTER XIV

It was six hours later when Tom left Riley's. In the wan light of the mountain-shadowed morning, he picked his way among the piles of broken bottles and slowly climbed the dump. He was weary with loss of sleep. His head rang with unaccustomed drinking. The earth was none too secure beneath his feet. But he was satisfied.

It was the satiation of change, the rest which comes from spent energies. He had had his playtime. Men of other environment demand books or chess or trout-fishing or the seeking of famous old paintings. The æsthetic sense of the men of Snowslide called for cruder excitations, and their big bodies demanded a major share of dissipation's amusements. Tom strode across the gray dump, toward the tunnel-mouth, relieved of the oppression that had weighed upon him the day before. He was eager to go to work.

On his way he saw two figures walking to-

ward the depot—a large man and a small man, the small man in the grasp of his companion. It was Ryan and Jack Tarpy. The Old Man had kept his word; they were hurrying to catch the freight for Leavenworth, where The Walker would sign the pledge before the priest. Tom looked at them and smiled. It was the smile of a man at a child; of strength on weakness—tolerant. *He* had no appetites. And his youth made him confident of moral strength where temptation had never attacked.

He had a feeling of security, of sureness in himself. For he had grown; he had developed in a night. As he walked his head rang; but it was back. His eyes ached; but they looked straight before him, masterfully. He knew he was a leader with a following. Bully of the camp, they called him. It meant that the camp was at his heels. He had prestige.

From this day he toiled in the heading a little apart from the men about him. He walked to and from the work among the shift, a figure of distinction. In the evenings, when he went downtown, men asked him to drink with them, and he knew that they had pride when he accepted the invitations. Heading

bosses nodded familiarly to him now, and called him by his first name. Men asked him to arbitrate small disputes; his word had weight in the bunk-houses. Once or twice, off the work, The Old Man questioned him tersely regarding the rock in the heading.

He answered the questions with wisdom. For he was learning many things still, as he had learned them under The Gunner's tutelage. He was absorbing what others had to give him, watching always what they did. Even when he loafed about the machine shop and timber sheds he was picking up knowledge while he gossipped with the mechanics.

When Jack Tarpy gave him the bench gang, three months after the fight, none were surprised. He took it proudly, with a leap of joy in his heart, but he took it as his due.

Kennedy got a similar position at about the same time. His shift preceded Tom's. When they met at the change of shifts, they had to consult regarding details of the work. Responsibility had not taken anything from The Dynamiter's recklessness. But it had made a change; it was as though there had been a tempering process and the absolute wantonness

was lacking now. Meeting him on the jumbo every day, Tom learned to respect this man whom he had fought. The two of them had found a new rivalry, a rivalry of emulation, each of them trying to make his gang do all that there was in them. And, although this competition was a big thing with them, they found themselves dealing with fairness in their conferences, generously giving to each other every necessary bit of information. They had grown bigger with their positions.

Tom stood, these days, near the edge of the fourteen-foot shelf of rock, with the reeling tripods thundering about him, and beneath his feet the crew of sweating muckers shoveling the broken rock. He supervised it all. Occasionally he gave an order, shouting it, deep-toned, from his chest. And as he shouted, he saw men leap to obey him. His assertiveness grew and with it his self-sureness. There developed, also—with the knowledge that what these men did would be charged to his account—a tendency to make up his mind upon sure premises, and a gravity. He was boss; but there was no wantonness in his autocracy.

Fall came and the concrete gangs. Far in

the wake of the roaring heading, they lined the tunnel with a thick coating of crushed rock and cement. There were more than one hundred of these men, wandering craftsmen, members of the same great army of floaters to which the hard rock men belonged. They had something of the recklessness that belonged to the drill runners, the lack of care of homeless men. They rioted on pay days, and among them were fighters. Rivalries sprang up between them and the tunnel workers; fights followed. Twice Big Jerry and Kennedy came back to the bunk-houses bruised and battered by a new champion, an unknown fighter. The fame of this man grew and his name became a byword. The camp began to mention it along with Tom's; to compare them, speculating on what would be the outcome of a battle between them. Finally, drawn by public opinion, the encounter came, and Tom went back to the camp with additional prestige.

That winter they made him heading boss and some of the best runners in the camp, the older men, who had worked in every corner of the continent where there was rock to rend, came to him—a hard-faced, big-limbed crew. Dur-

ing the month they bent their energies to toil beneath his hard, gray eyes; and they loved the mastery that the eyes spoke. On pay days they were ruffians.

"They'd go to hell fer him," Jack Tarpy told The Old Man one afternoon.

The Old Man growled. "They'll go to hell *wit* him some day, if they don't mind," he said. "Riley tells me they tore his new pianny up by the roots and throwed ut through the dure the other night—and he was wit them."

"'Twas one av them canned music piannys," explained The Walker, "and 'twould not play 'The Wearin' av the Green.' They can pull the rock, though. They do more than the two other shifts put together."

During that winter Tom came to a belief in hard men and giant powder. Handling them both, coming in contact with them daily, he looked upon their sort of strength as all there was of might.

CHAPTER XV.

CHRISTMAS EVE fell with yuletide softness upon that portion of Snowslide across the canyon from the boarding camp, the little space occupied by the cottages, where the families of The Old Man and some of the more responsible mechanics lived. Here there was talk of the season, happiness of anticipation and mystery of hidden presents.

In "B" bunk-house, Christmas Eve was a little more than three weeks ahead of one pay day and one week behind the next. It was a quiet night and cold. The men were in their bunks or round the heater stove, "driving tunnel," and if any of them thought of the date, they spoke of it in rough jest, as being the easiest way to pass a subject not belonging to their world. The growl of their heavy voices went through the door into the foreman's office, where Tom sat.

He did not hear them; he was going over his time book. His thick fingers were busy with

a stub pencil. Now he raised it to wet it between his lips; then went on writing awkwardly, breathing heavily with the excess of mental effort, scowling into the book. It was a large room; its floor was bare. On the board walls hung half a dozen pictures from a sporting paper, portraits of prizefighters, crouching, with their gloved fists upraised before them, and of full-limbed women, clad in tights; they were on pink paper. There was a photograph of two men standing side by side, a table between them, on the table a bottle and glasses; the two men held cigars in their mouths. Some previous occupant had left it; dust covered it, and it hung askew. In the corner was a bedstead, made from undressed lumber; the blankets lay in a knot upon it; the pillow hung limply, half over the side. Under the bed showed a corner of the wooden chest, where Tom still kept his father's hat and coat. There were two chairs; the back of one was broken; Tom sat on the other, before the pigeon-holed desk, made from two goods boxes. On the walls, his oilskins and squam hat hung from nails. He was shirt-sleeved, in his stockinged feet. His hair was in uncombed riot. Occasionally as he

labored over the time book he ran his left hand through it.

There was a knock on the door. "Come in!" he cried and turned to face the man. It was The Cartender. Tom swore in astonishment; The Cartender was dressed up. He wore a round rimmed hat of black felt, flat crowned, stiff as it had come from the bandbox, undented. It was tilted back from his forehead, that one carefully combed lock of hair might show. His clothes were black; the sack coat showed deep creases from long packing in a trunk. He wore a glistening celluloid collar and a pattern-tied four-in-hand of lilac tint thrust itself outward beneath his bronzed throat; the strap had slipped up over the collar in the rear. His square-toed shoes glistened with polish. His big brown hands hung straight down as though they were trying to escape the relentless pursuit of a pair of celluloid cuffs. He stood in the doorway, all his teeth showing in a self-conscious smile. "Merry Christmas!" he said.

Tom swore again. "That's so," he said. "How did ye raymimber?"

The Cartender came in and seated himself

with some care upon the edge of a broken chair. "Morans is to have a party," said he, "I was told to give ye a bid."

"Soho," said Tom, "that's it?" He scanned The Cartender critically. "That's the raison," he continued.

The Cartender grinned. "How'd you like 'em?" he demanded aggressively.

"Ye're hot shtuff," said Tom. "A dude, ye are. Best be diggin' out befure some of the byes gets a luk at ye. Have a drink?" He reached beneath his desk and brought out a quart bottle. The Cartender shook his head.

"I've cut ut out," said he, "I'm tendin' to business now. Murphy's goin' over to the other portal New Years an' I'm to be motor-man."

"Motorman! Ye'll ditch the thrain first trip!" Tom's face relaxed. "How'd ye do ut?"

"I've been larnin' all winter," said The Cartender, "gettin' what I could from Murphy an' takin' correspondence school avenin's. 'Tis a fine chanst I have at Moran's."

"Morans must have a hot dump to let the

likes of ye and Murphy board there," said Tom irrelevantly.

"Ye shud see ut wance," cried The Cartender. "Grub! Man, ye never get the like of ut in that there hash foundry"—he waved his hand toward the cook-house—"and 'tis like comin' home of a night. The Old Woman lets us have the parlor; and we get to see the others on the hill. There's two girls lives over there now besides Ryan's Nora. Man, uts civilized! Ye shud see the room I have; It's nate as a pin." He looked around him comprehensively, "Ye could bring a gang of them muckers in here wit their number two shovels and do this hole no harm," he said.

"So," said Tom. "'Tis the girls."

"The girls nothin'," said The Cartender, "they don't trouble me. I'm too busy wit the electrical engineerin' course to bother me head wit girls. Some day I'll be drawin' me easy salary while ye're poundin' tarriers on the backs or runnin' a slugger again in the headin'. But 'tis good to see them; and that's what I come fer. There's to be a few friends there to-night fer Christmas eve. Ryan's Old Woman will be

over and Nora and one or two others. Come on."

Tom flushed. "I'm not made fer yer high society," he growled. "I'm no saft-talkin' dude. Go get some av thim engineers; 'tis thim ye want."

"Come on!" The Cartender insisted, "none of them girls is goin' to bite ye. Why shud ye stick in this hole when there's the chanst fer a good time and dacent folk to talk wit?"

Tom frowned heavily. "Not me," he said.

"But," The Cartender was beginning—he had secured the privilege of inviting Tom by asking Mrs. Moran and he held it too dear to give up easily—"But, man, ye—"

Tom rose. "Listen here," he said sternly. "Raymimber the night I wore me father's hat to the depot, knowin' no betther? There was some av yer fine folk there that night and they laughed in me face because I was too grane fer thim. Raymimber the night I tuk that umbrelly to Ryan's house? And who was ut at the dure, slammed ut in me face? Answer me that! Go there! I'll see thim in hell first!"

"They meant no harm," said The Cartender,

"that night. It was The Old Woman. She was sore at Ryan, not you. I got the straight of ut some time ago."

Tom silenced him with a gesture. "Well," The Cartender rose, "I wisht ye *wud* come." He looked about him at the room, reeking of disorder, uncouth like the men of the tunnel. "Ye shud see where I live," he said.

"'Tis alright," said Tom, "alright fer ye but not fer me. I'm glad ye've quit the camp. 'Tis good to be wit women folk nearby, and the larnin' is a fine thing. I wisht I had more av ut. Luk at that." He held the time book before The Cartender. "Chicken thracks, but 'tis all that's naded, and I have no time fer more. The min kape me busy; thim an' the rock. I don't know which is worst. But I can handle thim both; dhrrive the wan an' pull the other. And that's phwat I'm here fer, phwat I like. I know me place; 'tis not wit yer fine folk on the hill."

"I wisht ye *wud* come," repeated The Cartender. "Annyhow, some day ye will. Merry Christmas!" He departed walking stiffly in his square-toed, polished shoes, the strap of the lilac tie high on the back of his celluloid collar.

Tom sat alone over the time book. After an hour he went to the outside door. It was snowing heavily. He shook his head. "Half an hour lost in the marnin'," he muttered, "help-in' the outside gang shovel things out." He went back to the room.

Before he turned out the light he looked about him—at the rough, unfinished walls with the gaudy pictures of the women and the prize fighters, the floor with dirt heaped in the corners, the riot of disorder, the muddy oilskins hanging from nails. He thought of what The Cartender had said of *his* room. "Nate as a pin," he muttered. He remembered what that meant, snowy linen and a floor that was immaculate. The memory took him far back.

And then he reached beneath his rough bed and brought forth the chest. He opened it and he took out the coat with the two narrow tails and the row of large buttons. He held it in the crook of his arm for a moment groping with the other hand for the hat. He found it and he brushed his cheek against the high crown. It seemed to him as though he could smell the peat smoke. He replaced them both and turned out the light.

CHAPTER XVI

CHRISTMAS morning saw the contour of the whole place changed. It had snowed all night, and the wind, sighing up the canyon, had drifted heaps where paths had been. Going to breakfast the shift waded to their waists. On the blacksmith shop platform Tom commanded them to fall to work with the outside gangs where speedy clearance of the way was demanded. He took thirty of them to the dump and set them to uncovering the main artery of travel by the timber sheds.

They were strung out in a long line; their black oilskins in startling relief against the white snow. It was sport for them, this brief half hour in the open; this handling of feathery flakes. Tossing the snow from their shovels they shouted laughter. They capered roughly in the drifts and threw great handfuls down one another's necks or wrestled trying to wash one another's faces, like schoolboys.

Their voices boomed among the muffling flakes as they indulged in the rude horse-play. Tom stood at the rear of the line watching them. And suddenly their laughter died and they were silent.

At the other end of the line Nora Ryan was standing in the pathway facing them. She was standing still, puzzled; and the drill runner at the head of the line was standing with his shovel thrust into the snow beside him, puzzled, as herself. She had waded this far, fighting her way through the soft snow, enjoying it. Rounding a corner she had come upon this place—on one side the timber shed, on the other a ten-foot drift; between (a two-foot interval at most) the path, filled now by the men. There was no space for her to pass them.

She faced the drill runner—it was Big Jerry relegated again to toil among the slug-gers—and she saw the long line of giants behind him, staring at them. Her cheeks grew redder. Jerry broke the silence under the spell of an inspiration, "Merry Christmas to ye," he said.

She laughed happily, "Merry Christmas!"

she replied. "I don't see how I'm going to get through."

Jerry scratched his cropped head tilting his squam hat forward. He had memories of the day when her mother had sweated between the boarding-house stove and the long table where he and other crop-haired giants ate. It seemed like only yesterday, when he had seen Ryan wheeling the baby carriage on a Sunday afternoon. "Ah yes," he said, "to get by. Ye were afther goin' to the commissary?" She nodded; he looked back over the line.

From his place Tom watched these two facing each other and the others staring at them. Usually quick in an emergency he was at a loss to solve the dilemma, and he was still trying to make up his mind when he saw Big Jerry begin to act. The giant was stretching out his arms; he lifted the girl as though she were a feather; then passed her to the man behind. And this man passed her to the next. Tom watched them, lifting her gently, man to man, across the interval toward him. He saw her coming closer and he frowned uneasily and then she arrived.

He took her from the last man. He was

waist deep in snow. She lay in his arms, briefly, a light burden. He felt the softness of her, the quick, half-startled breathing; it came against his cheek with a brush of auburn hair. It had a strange effect upon him. It made everything else go from him and he did not really know that he was wading heavily the few feet that separated them from the timber shed platform; that he was setting her down upon the planking. He only felt the softness of her, the presence of her close to him—the sacred presence of a young girl. A wave of diffidence surged over him. Then, through it, came the knowledge that she was smiling down upon him from where she stood, thanking him. He raised his big hand to his squam hat. It lingered there and he removed the hat a little clumsily. She smiled again brightly.

“Merry Christmas!” she cried.

He smiled back, holding his squam hat in his hand, “Merry Christmas to ye, Miss,” he answered gravely and she departed.

The memory of that incident used to bother Tom. Often, when he was alone in his rough room or standing by himself in the roaring

heading watching the sluggers, he thought of it. Sometimes he coupled it with what he had said the night before, talking to The Cardtender, "I'll see him in hell." And then he grew hot with shame. Sometimes it brought a little wistfulness.

But the wistfulness did not endure for long. It was like the memories when occasionally he opened his wooden chest and touched the old coat and the hat; memories of another world than that in which he lived, a gentler, softer world, with soft hands and faces alight with love.

He lingered briefly over these things. *His* world was hard; and the hands that strove against its ringing rock were gnarled and rough. It was a world of mighty muscles and reckless deeds. Living in it he loved it.

His life was full during the months that followed, months that stretched on into another year. It was full of action. He drove his hard-faced men and driving them grew harder. Sternness came upon him. But there was one thing that had stopped growing, the responsibility. It had developed for all the calls there were upon it.

He drove the men. But he lived their life. He ate in the bare-walled dining hall. He slept in his rough room. He captained the assault upon the heading's breast in the reverberating tunnel, where they beat the living rock with steel and tore it with dynamite. And off the work sometimes he played as the men played. He caroused and he fought those who crossed him. Always he was on hand for duty when morning dawned after paynight. But there was no gentleness to temper his actions—His world was hard.

CHAPTER XVII

ON matters of railroad policy The Doctor was the oracle of Snowslide. In his day he had tried out as candidates and had passed to friendship many men who had, since the ordeal, risen to places of importance. Occasionally one of them, sidetracking his private car or alighting from the steps of a Pullman, stopped off at Snowslide to pay a call at the post-office. As a consequence those who gossipped with The Doctor got the latest news from the inside, news of changes in the engineering department, of new rolling stock, regrades, projected steel bridges, and of the president's impending visit.

The tunnel was the president's pet project and, although it had been in process of construction for three years now, he had never inspected it. He was a peculiar type, a relic of a disappearing class—the master who personally supervises his men. He had never been a stock manipulator but had built his road

by helping develop the country through which it passed—until it had become a transcontinental line with steamship connections at both ends and had begun to absorb other systems. No task in commercial upbuilding was too large for him, no detail in any wise relating to the work too small. Wherever men talked of the railroad, in great cities' roaring hearts, on prairie wheatfields wide beneath the sun, on the tops of swaying box cars cinder swept, they spoke in the same breath of him, praising or cursing.

Sooner or later he would visit the tunnel; would look it over with his sharp, black eyes, then depart and he would send back the word that would bring dismay or joy. When was he going to come? The Old Man often asked The Doctor that question and The Doctor only shook his head. Until, one night when the two of them were sitting at the table in the little back parlor with the bottle of Scotch whiskey and the glasses between them, the station agent brought a telegram.

The Doctor read it swiftly, "I have news," he said, "Uncle Jimmy is to be with us in the morning."

Ryan bounded from his chair. "What's that?" he shouted.

"It's true," said The Doctor. "He stole a march to Spokane on the Overland and he's commandeered the division superintendent's private car." He held the yellow slip toward Ryan, but the latter was making toward the door.

That night an extra gang worked straightening things outside the portal and lights burned late in the engineer's quarters. When the president swung from the steps of his special and hurried to "D" quarters, he found Ryan there to meet him. The two of them spent more than an hour looking at the concrete plant and the power house; then they went inside. By that time a party was hanging at their heels.

There was Weed, the resident engineer, high-collared, clean-shaven, wearing high laced boots. With him walked two men from the private car, stenographers by calling. They, too, wore high collars and their faces were white with the pallor that comes from indoor work. They talked with Weed about the city, telling him of cotillions and card par-

ties; they commented audibly on the things they saw, staring at the men whom they regarded as hoboes. In front of them—between them and the two leaders—walked the president's son. He was a young man, in his thirties. His eyes were dark like his father's but they lacked the lines of keenness about the older man's; and they were large, the eyes of a student. He had wiped engines in a round-house after his graduation from college; and had gone from that into the machine shops. He was still learning, studying the road, acquiring knowledge of details which would fit him for carrying on his father's work. He listened to the president and Ryan, looking carefully at the things about him, saying nothing, paying no heed to the chatter of the trio behind him.

When the party arrived at the heading, the muckheap there was all but gone. Before them the four columns loomed. On each column two thundering machines; at each machine, the runner, big-bodied, his hard face calm, intent upon the work. Among the plunging chucks, leaping between them, crouching as they toiled, the helpers, their

faces spattered with grit, blackened by oil, gleaming through the fog of the exhausts. Behind all these stood Tom.

He was watching the work. In the roaring rock-bound chamber he stood, his hands folded behind his back, his broad shoulders bending a little forward, motionless like a great black statue.

Ryan touched him on the arm. He turned and saw the bearded president whose name was synonym for power, whom he knew as master of them all. He had heard of the impending visit and at once he knew this was the man. His gray eyes were keen in scrutiny. The black eyes met them, hard, shrewd, with lines about their corners. The two looked steadily at each other for a moment. Ryan bent over and shouted in Tom's ear, "Where are ye?"

"On the fourteen-foot; we'll shoot in the half hour," he shouted back.

His eyes went over the group as they stood watching:—the president, the man who had made the road; his strong, bearded face was lined with energy and planning. Beside him, Ryan, legs apart, head back, now waving his

hand to point, now bending to shout into his neighbor's ear; sure of himself, a master too. The younger man with the pointed beard, studying what was there, making no movement, silent, observant.

Tom felt proud as he looked. He felt pride in The Old Man standing thus beside this other who was mighty; and he felt proud of the fact that it was his shift which they had come in to see. It was the pride of a commander whose good troops are undergoing inspection during action. Suddenly his eyes went to the stenographers.

One of them was staring at him. He was a thin-faced man. In this artificial light his white face seemed even paler than it was. He was puffing a thick, Turkish cigarette. He was staring at Tom as though Tom were some strange animal—the stare of believed superiority that has no understanding.

The odor of the cigarette came to Tom's nostrils and it revolted him. He saw the look, the thin body, the high, white collar, the cheeks that showed anemia. His anger rose within him.

It was not the man. He was a little thing.

Even his stare by itself, would have made Tom smile. It was something bigger—the man represented an institution. And toward that institution Tom was intolerant.

He had no knowledge of the gentler life that others led. He had developed in this place among toilers who had no homes save their bunks, who made their huge muscles do mighty things. He had physical superiority over these men; and he had mastered them through that and his ability to drive. He lived in action and believed in it. And there was something more, something that had come into existence generations before him beside peat fires—class feeling. It was deep within him. It gave the intolerance toward those whom he believed to hold themselves above him, those whom his ignorance pictured to him as living useless lives.

That class feeling was the curse of his kind. It had made them as out of sympathy with others as others were with them. It had cursed the Cœur d'Aleners, making them kill and maim and destroy until now they were fugitives bearing other names than their own. It had cursed the hard rock men, making

them proud of their roughness, half defiant in a swaggering braggadocia, keeping them closer to the rude.

It gripped the two men as they looked, this feeling of class, this intolerance made bigger by ignorance of each other's lives. The one saw a huge, hard-faced brute. The other saw an unhealthy pallor, a high collar and a Turkish cigarette. They both stared; but in the eyes of the bigger man was a strength of contempt that made the other's drop. Tom spat and turned his back.

When the visitors departed he turned and looked after them. The Old Man and the president were walking shoulder to shoulder, shouting into each other's ears. The stenographers and Weed were hanging close together, and the two pale men from the offices were gazing curiously at the men, comprehending nothing of what they saw. Between the two parties, walking by himself, watching everything, trying to understand it that he might be better able some day to handle it as a master, went the president's son.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was a matter of two months after his visit before the president let Snowslide know what he thought of the work. This time The Old Man brought the news to The Doctor. They smiled at the tidings in the little back parlor, and drank solemnly in honor of the event.

"Two tunnels," Ryan repeated for the fourth time. "'Twill be a big job."

"The biggest tribute they could have paid you," said The Doctor impressively. "The largest thing the road has ever undertaken."

"Soft ground, some av ut; and some av ut hard rock," The Old Man went on. "I guess Uncle Jimmy was suited alright, alright, when he made his little call."

The Doctor rubbed his white hands. "How soon did you say they begin?" he asked.

"Next winter," said Ryan. "As soon as we're done here. Do ye know, there's wan thing botherin' me now that I think av ut; where am I to get my superintendents?" he

frowned and shook his head. "Two big jobs and me to oversee them both, and thirty miles apart. That means a different breed than walkers is made of. A walker, ye see, ye can watch, and kape him sober if need be. But when ye are away, maybe fer weeks at a time, ye need somewan ye can depend on. Tarpy is not fit fer ut; he'd be on a drunk in two monts. Mike Moran over on the other portal could do ut; he's a mole and never stays outside long enough to get into trouble. He might do. But where's the other?"

"I'll tell you," said The Doctor, "a young man who will make his mark some day. It's that lad Morton, a fine lad."

"Morton, hell!" said The Old Man; "ye may think so. But I know him and his breed. 'Tis his first tunnel job, this, and already he is so tough he has a name fer ut. He's like all the rest of them. Only the whiskey has not got him yet. But get him on another job and ye'll see him blossom out. The only raison he hasn't jumped this job, is because work has been slack fer two years back an' there's no place to go. He fights an' he drinks an' he has no regard fer man, God or the devil. He

will be a stiff like all of thim. No sir. He'll get his shift if he goes wit me, and he'll get his chance. But in tree monts he'll be on the road wit his blankets rolled on his back. I know him. What I am talkin' of is *stiddy* men—'tis them I want."

"A young fellow like Morton," said The Doctor, "ought to get married."

"Married!" exploded Ryan. "Who is the likes of him to marry; Snowslide Ann?" He looked at his watch. "I must go over the hill in the half hour," he said, "the chief engineer is there from St. Paul. I'll have to see Tarpy before I catch that freight."

Emerging from the door he failed to see a short, broad figure whip into Scotty Riley's dance hall. Otherwise he would have gotten his talk with Tarpy.

The Walker had seen Ryan just in time to get out of sight. The dance hall was deserted. Behind the bar the proprietor sat back in an uptilted chair reading a day's old paper. He rose as Tarpy entered, and smiled his noncommittal smile. "Have a drink?" he asked.

The Walker shook his head; he was looking upward at the clock. "That's so," said Riley

suavely, "I'd forgotten you're on the wagon."

Tarpy did not answer; his eyes were still on the clock. Its long hand was close to the half-past. A moment later he lowered his eyes and glanced furtively through the door. "Now," he said, "I'll take ut—whiskey."

Riley reached beneath the bar and brought out the bottle. He shoved it forward and smiled carefully as The Walker poured the glass to the brim. Then Tarpy drank.

At "D" quarters The Old Man found Tom scanning blue prints in The Walker's office. "Where's Tarpy?" he demanded. Tom shook his head. "I saw him going down the dump a few minutes ago," he said.

"I was waitin' agin he comes back. When we come out this mornin' there was some chances of the timberin' goin' down wit the next shot. I wanted to tell him."

"Funny I didn't meet him," mused Ryan. "I wonder where he went." He took out his watch and looked at it uneasily; then walked up and down the room. All at once a thought came over him; he growled a savage oath and ran to the calendar that hung beside The Walk-

er's desk. He scanned it an instant then straightened his back and turned toward Tom. His face was grim. "How long since did he go, ye say?" he asked.

"A matter of twinty minutes," said Tom.

"It's all off," said Ryan. Tom was staring at him. He struggled with his feelings a moment; then gave them vent. "Mr. Tarpy," he said with elaborate sarcasm in his pronunciation, "is getting dhrunk. If ye will remember, 'twas two years ago ye and Kennedy had ut out in Riley's—two years last night. In the marnin' Mr. Tarpy signed the pledge. A year from then he signed ut again. And twenty minutes ago his time was up. By this time he is full to the neck of Riley's whiskey."

He resumed his pacing to and fro. Now and then he swore aloud. He wheeled toward Tom. "Bad ground, ye said?"

"Shaky overhead," said Tom, "and tight in the headin'."

A whistle from the direction of the depot reached Ryan's ears. "That freight," he exclaimed, "I must get over the hill. Now listen here, the chief engineer is comin'—perhaps this afternoon. Ye will take charge. And see to

ut that ye get things in good order if there's anny roof comes down. I'll—."

A nipper boy slouched into the door, "Where's The Walker?" he demanded. The Old Man jerked his thumb toward Tom, "Right there," he said. "Say what ye have to say, an' say ut quick."

The nipper stared a moment, then grinned. "The last shot blowed down ten sets of timbers," he drawled, "they want ye inside."

Ryan strode toward the door. Holding it open he turned toward Tom, "Who's shift is this?" he asked.

"Kennedy's," said Tom.

"Alright," said Ryan. "Ye and that anarchist get that mess cleared up agin I get back or I'll fire every man on the work." He stamped out. "Drive hell out o' them," he shouted over his shoulder.

CHAPTER XIX .

THE empty muck train was starting into the tunnel as Tom reached the blacksmith shop platform. He leaped on board and in a moment he was being rushed through the blackness. Through the roar of the wheels he heard a dull boom and in the rush of air upon his face he felt a trembling pulsation. "The side round," he muttered; "Half the ruff is down wit ut now, 'tis like."

"Damned if I don't think 'twas the whole mountain," a drill runner called to him as the train stopped and he leaped out three hundred feet before the jumbo. "The rock and timbers is all over the place."

"Where's Kennedy?" Tom demanded. Someone pointed to a knot of the Cœur d'Aleners gathered round their heading foreman. Kennedy raised his bowed head as Tom pushed his way among them. "Sick as a dog," he said, "the smoke is somethin' fierce. Where's Tarpy?"

"Drunk," Tom answered. "I'm in charge; what's down?"

"Eight or ten sets of timbers and God knows how much rock on top of thim. 'Tis all over the air pipe and more fallin' every minute. We're afther eatin' a bit av smoke tryin' to open the valves." He laughed and jerked his thumb behind him. Tom saw, stretched beside the plumb posts, three shadowed forms. One of them was stirring, moaning. Kennedy clapped him on the back; "How's that, Old Boy," he cried, "pretty good fer wan thrip in, hey?"

The giants about him spat and laughed. "The ruff," said one, "is drappin' in big chunks."

"Come on, Kennedy," said Tom. Let's go an take a luk at ut. You, byes, you three, come wit us,"

Kennedy walked beside him; at their heels the three Cœur d'Aleners. Their candle flames cast flickering lights upon their hard eyes, and shadows crept down weirdly over their reckless faces. Tom glanced at The Dynamiter, thinking of the night two years before when they had fought. It seemed as though they

must have been another pair, who rained blows on each other while the crowd yelled. The two years had brought them to an esteem that was more than half liking.

"So Tarpy's drunk?" The Dynamiter was asking.

"And the chief engineer due here in the afternoon," said Tom. "'Tis up to us to clane this mess, Kennedy. Can we do ut?"

The Dynamiter laughed and struck him on the back again. "If we can't, no one can," he cried.

At the summit of the bench they paused and held their candles aloft to peer into the darkness. By the waving light they saw a heap of snarled timbers and boulders rising high before them, mantled by powder smoke. Above, where the roof had been, yawned an abyss. From its black recesses drops of water were splashing sluggishly upon the wreckage.

The successive blasts had shaken down thirty feet of timbering, thick beams, four-inch planks, and cordwood lagging. As this support had given way the rock—rotten here with slips and faults—had crashed down upon it, splintering great beams, grinding planks to

matchwood. The whole now lay in an indiscriminate pile. Round it the dynamite smoke hung in a thick, blue fog; over it, in the yawning hole whence it had come, huge fragments hung uncertainly.

As they stood a stone fell from the hole. A shower of loose particles followed. Then there was silence save for the dripping of the water. "Lots more where that come from," laughed Kennedy.

The powder smoke came to their nostrils; the air was thick with its acrid fumes. The poisonous gases set the blood to pounding through their veins.

"We'll clear the air line," Tom's voice boomed in the emptiness and went whispering on upward into the mysterious recesses where the roof had been.

"Come on, byes," said Kennedy.

The pipe that carried the air lay along the side of the tunnel. It was covered deep with broken rock and timbering. They clambered to it and set to work to remove the debris from the nipples—the valves where the hose were usually coupled. They toiled, crouching on their hands and knees, wrestling with great

rocks and timbers, dragging them away slowly. As they strove the powder gases entered their lungs. Dizziness came over them; their heads seemed swelling to bursting and they felt their blood pounding against the walls of every vein like hammer strokes. Their surcharged eyes ached as though they would burst from the sockets, and became blind. They gasped; at times they reeled and almost fell. Fragments of the rock crashed down about them.

"Fall, damn ye, fall," growled Kennedy. "Where the hell's a monkey wrench, some-
wan. I've a nipple in me fingers."

Tom passed him a wrench. The Dynamiter flattened himself upon his stomach, cursing as he fumbled beneath him, growling imprecations upon the mountain, daring it to come down and overwhelm him. "I have ut now!" he cried. A thin, sibilant shriek followed his words; it grew louder. A cool breath smote Tom's cheek. The Dynamiter groped again; the whistle of another valve joined the first. "Alright," he cried, and straightened his body. He smiled into Tom's face.

"'Tis done," said Kennedy. In the yellow candle light Tom saw his smile. 'An avalanche

of rock descended upon them. The smiling face vanished in black darkness and Tom fell, struck down by one of the boulders.

When his senses recovered, the nearest of the Cœur d'Aleners was still running toward him. And he began to remember with strange swiftness the separate things that had happened; Kennedy's face smiling into his; there were sweat drops on the forehead, and it seemed to him as though some of the ugly lines had gone; then the obliteration of the light; the heavy blow in the darkness.

He strove to rise. The Cœur d'Alener was beside him now, holding high his candle, peering forward. Sharp pains racked Tom's body. He groaned as he raised himself weakly to his knees.

"Where's Kennedy?" he asked.

The other two were there now, bending over something a few feet away, struggling to lift a weight. As he spoke, they rolled away a huge rock. And then he saw Kennedy.

"Dead," he heard them saying. He crawled closer, trailing one arm limp beside him. The three Cœur d'Aleners were kneeling, holding their candles above the crushed body.

Tom bent over it and he saw the waxen face stir; the lips moved. He bent closer, though the effort wrung his body with pain. The lips moved again. It was a bare whisper. It reached his ear. A woman's name. And then the lips were still. The Dynamiter died.

Finally a Cœur d'Alener spoke. "What was ut?" he asked. His voice was quiet—these men had worshipped Kennedy. Tom shook his head.

"Had he anny folk?" he asked.

"None," they told him, one after the other.

"We must get him out," said Tom. His responsibility came back to him and with it a determination that took the place of strength. "You, lads; take him down. Tell the others to bring in the lights and call the shift."

He looked after them as they departed staggering with the body of their leader, picking their way among the broken rocks, speaking in low tones. Then he sat alone thinking. His arm throbbed and his body was full of stabbing hurts; they came to him now in a strange, subconscious way, like punctuations to his thoughts. His mind was with Kennedy.

This rough man, this dynamiter, fugitive

from justice, gigantic, savage-faced; who had sneered at him, whom he had fought, who had led his followers recklessly, who was striving beside him a few moments ago. The man had smiled into his face; and he had died whispering a woman's name. Somewhere back in the past, back in the years that lay behind his wanderings, she had lived. And, dying, he had harked back to her.

The shift came with the lights. He set his teeth while they helped him bind his arm in a rude sling. Then he sank down on a rock, and he sat there directing them while they cleared away the ruin. Pain swept over his being in great waves; his head swam and a thin, cold sweat filmed his face. About him men panted, tearing away loose rock and timbers, setting new timbers overhead. They swarmed the place; the chamber rang with the blows of their sledges; and through it all—from the nipples that Kennedy had freed—came the sharp, shrill whistle of the air. The chasm in the roof dripped water; now and then a shower of stones fell among the toilers.

He gave them orders, in a voice that did not

seem to be his own. At times, in the stress of sudden emergency, he came back to himself and he shouted; and they leaped in response. Then his mind went back, dully—over and over the catastrophe, the rush of death close beside him, the mutter of the stilling lips.

He had not eaten nor drunk since morning. The pain was growing to a strange lethargy, a cold numbness, that seemed to creep upward from his waist. He fought against it, to hold himself together.

Slowly the heap of wreckage vanished; slowly the timbers spanned the chasm overhead. Afternoon wore on to evening and evening toward midnight. He sat upon the rock, directing them. When they had the gangway laid and the first barrow loads of muck had started for the jumbo, someone looked around and saw him lying in a huddle across the boulder.

The Old Man, coming inward—cheerful because the chief engineer had gone to bed for the night—met four of the runners, bearing Tom. He glanced sharply at their burden, saw who it was, and stopped.

"His head went back on him," one of the bearers explained. "He rowled over, goin' to sleep like when they done the timberin'."

"All stove in," they answered, when he demanded diagnosis. "A rock smashed down on him in the marnin'."

Ryan did not fume, but came to purpose at once, and to foresight. "Take him to Moran's," he said. "I'll go ahead an' see that they get ready fer him. No hospital fer his; I want him to be about some time before next fall."

CHAPTER XX

SEVERAL days later, Tom awoke from the dreamless slumber that follows fever. He was lying between smooth linen sheets; they caressed him with a soft, cool touch. It was very soothing. The morning sunlight streamed across his bed and cascaded from the white coverlet to the matting on the floor, a clean, sweet radiance from out of doors. He turned his head to see it better and the pillow-slip brushed his cheek, stiff with growth of beard. He was weary; weakness enwrapped him; he did not care to raise his head or think. Somewhere in the open an insect buzzed droningly; a clock ticked in the silence. He drowsed contentedly.

He awoke again. It was a little room, with a board ceiling. The walls were covered with light-tinted paper, figured with small, stiff clusters of flowers. On the paper someone had pinned colored pictures, cut from the covers of weekly magazines; women's faces, the faces

of young women, gentle-featured. He stared at them for some time; growing more widely conscious, he raised his head. It fell back limply on his pillow and he groaned. The stab of pain took him swiftly back from here; he was in the tunnel where the rock fell round him. A hand upon his forehead roused him, and he opened his eyes into Nora Ryan's.

"It's cleared away," he said. "Is ut cleared?"

"Yes," she told him; "everything is alright. You must lie still."

"And Kennedy?" His voice was weak, high-pitched, fretful, like a child's.

"Go to sleep," she said. "There, there, go to sleep." She talked as though he were a restless baby.

He tossed his limbs impatiently; then subsided weakly, moving his tongue stiffly between his dry lips. "I want a drink," he said, complainingly.

She brought a glass of water and slipped a little hand behind his head. While he drank, her face was close to his. Her auburn hair gleamed, where it caught a ray of the morning sunshine, and her brown eyes, full of the gen-

tleness that comes with caring for another—the solicitude of sympathetic nursing—regarded him softly. He accepted everything—the feeling in the eyes, the little sustaining hand—unquestioningly, as though he were a child. When she bade him again to go to sleep, he closed his eyes.

Later on, he opened them slowly and he saw Mrs. Moran beside his bed. Her worn face was relaxed and she smiled at him. He gazed curiously at her, and he half-frowned, uneasily. She laid her finger on her lips and stole from the room. He heard her voice through the door; then the rustle of skirts and a quick, light step. Nora stood before him; he sighed contentedly. She fed him some hot broth, holding the spoon to his mouth with one hand, while she raised his head with the other. Her cheeks were pink and white—the blood came and went quickly over them, beneath the transparent skin—and her red lips curved with sympathy. When she had done, he lay back, wearied, thinking slowly. Finally:

“Kennedy is dead,” he said.

“You mustn’t talk, the doctor says,” she told him.

He shook his head from side to side on the pillow. "Kennedy is dead," he repeated. "I raymimber." Then he lay silent again, thinking; and he went to sleep.

When the company doctor came and changed the bandages upon the broken rib and shoulder, he looked cheerfully at the patient. "You'll do," he said; "they couldn't kill you with an axe." Departing, he talked briefly with Mrs. Moran. "All he needs is what you're giving him," he told her, "quiet and rest. To-morrow you can let him talk."

That night Tom slept and wakened fitfully. He felt the dull pains throb to sharpness, then subside and weigh down upon him like a load that would not leave. In the long, interminable darkness, his mind went uneasily over and over the thing that had happened—the black hole, the clouds of mantling smoke that made his blood pound through his head, the water dropping sluggishly, the Cœur d'Aleners crouching round him, fighting to clear the air line, Kennedy beside him; outstretched prone; rising to his feet; The Dynamiter's smile; the crashing rock; the waxen face; the lips moving slowly, whispering a woman's name; then the

long struggle to endure while men toiled round him.

In the morning he regarded the streaming sunshine on the coverlet and the gentle faces of the women on the primly papered walls. When Nora brought his breakfast, he looked dumb thankfulness into her eyes. Her presence took the load away. She sponged his hot face and then he supped the broth from the spoon which she was holding to his lips.

"You're feeling better," she told him. Her voice was pitched low, as women modulate their voices for the sick room. To his ears it was wonderfully soft and her face, before him now, with the sunshine on her auburn hair, was comforting. It soothed. Voice and face were in accord with the other things about him, things that were out of his world of harsh noises and heavy strife. He gazed upon her slowly.

"Yes," he said. "Was I hurt bad?"

"The doctor says it is your shoulder and a rib," she told him. "They're broken. But 'twas the fever was the danger. You hurt yourself staying inside there."

He shifted his head to one side and the pain came back. "Kennedy is dead," he said.

She nodded. "Where is he?" He asked the question as though it were troubling him.

"They buried him," she answered softly. His look was still unsatisfied. "On the hill," she added.

"Ah, yes," he said; "on the hill."

That was it; on the hillside, under the black hemlocks. The little graveyard with the wooden headboards, where none ever visited. He shook his head slowly. "It can't be helped," he said finally. He was thinking of The Dynamiter's stilled lips, whispering their last word in the shadows. He sighed wearily. "No, it can't be helped."

She regarded him, half puzzled.

"He might av had some folk," he explained. "He must av, somewhere."

That afternoon The Old Man strode into the little room and filled it with his presence. He stood in the middle of the floor, booted, big-bodied, his diamond flashing from his tie, his hat back on his head. And yet there was in him now something of uncertainty, a little awkwardness of bodily poise, an uneasiness of po-

sition. And his eyes went questioningly to Nora, as though for orders. She held her finger to her lips. "Don't talk too much," she bade him, and he nodded mutely as she left.

He turned to Tom a trifle diffidently, as though Tom's helplessness had raised a barrier which he found it hard to cross. "Well," he said finally, "ye're comin' through alright." Tom smiled weakly.

"In ten days," Ryan continued, seating himself, "the doctor says ye c'n be about a bit." He fidgeted as Tom made no answer and turned his chair so that he strode it. "Is there annythin' ye want?" he asked abruptly; "annythin' I c'n do fer ye?" Tom shook his head. "Some cigars?" The Old Man went on. "Say," he lifted his voice a little under an inspiration, "I've got some good whiskey at the house; I c'n bring ye some."

"Indeed, ye can not," Nora's voice came evenly from the doorway. Ryan grinned a little sheepishly. "Nivver mind," he said. "Ye must let the women boss ye now fer a while. Pretty soon ye'll be up, an' yer own masther. Lave me know if there's annythin'

ye want." He looked at Tom and frowned uncertainly; then he went away.

"It seems like he's lost his grip," he told Mrs. Moran, on the steps. "He don't care nothin'. Nivver a word from him about the work."

"The work, indade!" she cried. "Lave the bye get well first."

In the days that followed, this listlessness hung. Tom never asked about the tunnel. Even when The Cartender came to see him in the evenings, sitting beside the bed for hours at a time, Tom had few words for him. Something had changed. The Cartender noted it, with eyes that were full of vague trouble. And when he talked with Mrs. Moran he shook his head anxiously.

"He's lost his grip, I tell ye," The Old Man repeated a week later, on the doorstep. "An' him the wan man I was dependin' on fer walker this summer. He does not care a—" He checked himself suddenly and glanced furtively toward Nora, who had come up behind Mrs. Moran, and he went down the path to do his swearing, where she could not hear.

In the little room, Tom was lying silent,

staring upward with unseeing eyes. He often lay this way for hours, burdened by the thing that pressed upon him now. In the night, when darkness brought back the pain and long, silent hours stretched on and on interminably, hours when there was neither sight nor sound, this thing weighed heaviest, like a bad dream that would not cease. The Dynamiter, this violent man of violent life, homeless; the death that had come suddenly in the middle of a mountain, which reared its head among a wilderness of peaks. The rock that he had battered had smitten him down. And his mind had flitted far back; while his face became waxen, he had gone to other things—to where a woman had been. That was a lonely tragedy.

Sometimes it frightened Tom. Lying here helpless he had lost something. The utter disregard, the splendid wantonness that had been his while strength flowed through him; it was gone now.

There was a change. His mind had stopped suddenly. It had stopped—in the access of bodily effort, at the uttermost point of physical striving—among crashing rock and sweating

men. And then he had awakened here—with the memory of the tragedy—among women, dependent upon them, faced by the sweet necessities of things which he had long forgotten.

With the awakening, his viewpoint had begun to change. The beliefs which he had cherished, the self-nursed, swaggering beliefs, had gone. It was as though, in the midst of the physical, a mighty hand had taken him by the shoulder, twisting him to a sudden halt, facing him with a lesson—a two-fold lesson, death and gentle women. It had been a mighty shock, and the lesson was sinking in.

“You’re stronger to-day,” Nora told him, when she had given him a drink of water one afternoon; “I’ll read to you.”

“Thank ye,” he said, and the listlessness which The Old Man had noticed was not in his voice now. When she came beside him, his mind was always easier; her presence drove away the black obsession that had weighed upon him. His eyes hung upon her; there was a new light in their grayness.

She read to him from a paper-covered book. It was a cheap romance; its hero was splendid; its heroine spoke in stilted platitudes; a story

of an imaginative world, whither her fancy had often wandered, getting away from the pine cottages and the littered canyon bed, to dwell among ideals. It was replete with artificiality, full of long words and quotations from the French. She mispronounced the words, and stumbled haltingly through the italicized quotations. But her voice was low and full of sympathy, and as she read her face lighted up with feeling. He kept his eyes upon her and he was very happy.

The next afternoon he asked her to read again; and after that she sat beside him daily, with the open book before her. And watching her, he got things that were not in the pages—watching her transparent cheeks, with the color coming and going, her long-lashed eyes, her hair, where the sunlight often lingered.

The knitting of the bones progressed, now. He sat up in bed, and when The Cartender came in the evenings, they talked together until late. The Old Man dropped in afternoons, and once "The Doctor" called, with a handful of cigars. "My word!" said he. "You look fit to be about already." And Tom laughed when he told a joke. After that Ryan called

to tell him of the progress; they would be ready for the holing in a few months now. Tom's interest was coming back.

He began to be uneasy in his bed, to long to move about. He grew a little irritable with Mrs. Moran. Normality was returning to him. But always there remained with him—like a heritage from those black hours—an indelible impression that made him graver. It was like a steadying weight. And there was something more. It always came to him while he listened to Nora reading or watched her moving about the room, something softer than anything that he had ever known. He did not understand the extent of this himself until the first day he walked.

"You'll not need me any more," she laughed, as he staggered slowly to the porch, where Mrs. Moran had fixed the blankets on his chair. He settled himself slowly within the wrappings and looked up at her.

"Not need ye?" he asked. Then he realized, and he flushed. He saw the red sweep over her cheeks as she answered.

"In a few days, now," she said lightly, "you'll be about."

"That's so," he said slowly, and then, "I will be gone." He looked at her for a moment, as he had often looked at her while he lay helpless. She dropped her eyes. They were silent for some time, and he felt a sudden wave of diffidence sweeping over him. "Ye have been good to me," he said finally. "How did ye come to do ut?" The question had never occurred to him before.

"Why, anyone would do that," she answered quickly; "any woman."

"Would they?" he asked; then, "Ah, yis, so they would,"

She did not answer, and some way he felt that she did not like what he had said. Then, "Ye have been very good to me," he repeated slowly.

The next day he walked to the porch alone, and it was Mrs. Moran helped him into the chair. He did not ask for Nora, but he was uneasy, and he glanced continually toward the Ryan cottage. He had been there more than a half hour before he saw her emerge from the door and come along the path. Somehow her brief visit was altogether different than their talks had been. She read to him for a while,

and even then he felt the change. And the two of them spoke as though his coming of strength had lessened their acquaintance, taking away a hundred little half-intimacies; as though a common ground had gone from beneath their feet.

That evening he asked The Cartender more eagerly about the tunnel, and he called somewhat feebly to The Old Man, from the porch the next afternoon, to see what job was open for him.

"You are well, now," Nora said, when she came over. It was to see Mrs. Moran she said that she had come. She regarded him with a bit of something in her demeanor that was neither defiance nor sauciness, but savored a little of both.

"I go away 'day afther tomorro'," he said. "I've got to get to work."

"I heard," she said, "you are to be walker."

He had been very proud when The Old Man had given the position to him, and yet "D" quarters did not seem now to hold the fascination that he had expected. Two days later, when he bade good-bye to Mrs. Moran—she was cheerful in laughing at his thanks—he

ended awkwardly and asked for Nora. And when Nora came from the kitchen, he found that his manner was, in spite of himself, very stiff. He shook hands with her and then he limped slowly down the path toward the camp.

CHAPTER XXI

THE Walker's office was a bare-floored room, with plain board walls and scanty furniture. Odds and ends from the work littered it. A pair of muddy jack screws lay in one corner; on the pine table were an engineer's steel tape, a roll of blue prints, some engine brasses, a bundle of candles and a briar pipe; on the walls, muddy oilskins and squam hats, the flamboyant calendar of a powder company and a cross-section diagram of the tunnel. It was a small room; it reeked with suggestions of the work. It was the nerve-center of the entire job; the headquarters.

Tom sat at the desk here one evening, nearly two months after he had left Moran's. His broad shoulders were bent forward; he was poring over the open pages of a thick book, the catalogue of a Seattle mail order house. His brown hair was carefully combed, parted in a straight line; his neck was uneasy in the bind-

ing embrace of a linen collar; his back and big limbs seemed ready to burst from the clothes that covered them—a blue serge suit, still smelling of the clothier's shelves. His feet were in yellow tan shoes, and as he bent over the catalogue, he occasionally shifted them uneasily, as though they hurt him.

A timber boss came in from supper, to talk about the lagging which the woodcutters were bringing from the lower canyon. He saw the clothes and grinned. Looking upward from the pages he was scanning, Tom caught the grin and frowned uneasily. He turned the book face downward a little hurriedly, hiding what he had been looking at.

A few minutes after the man had departed, he laid down the catalogue again, at the sound of a footstep behind him. It was Jerry Morley, in charge now of the evening shift. They were going to shoot; should they use the old powder? They argued briefly over the nature of the rock and the speed of the dynamite. When they had settled the matter, Jerry looked Tom over with the freedom of an old acquaintance. "'Tis a hot layout ye have," he ventured.

Tom looked him in the eyes. "Annythin' wrang wit ut?" he demanded.

But Jerry was slow to understand that he had made a *faux pas* and proceeded to another. He reached over Tom's shoulder and picked up the catalogue.

"Going to buy a gun?" he asked.

"Lay that down," said Tom. His face was red.

"Cranky as hell," Jerry muttered, as he left the place. "Something's on his mind I do be thinkin'."

Tom was looking at his watch, scowling. "Half an hour to mail time yet," he said aloud. He opened the catalogue.

"What have ye there?" he whirled, his big face lowering irritably. It was The Old Man, standing wide-footed in the doorway, his eyes upon the suit. He, too, was frowning. "I'll have ye know," he said, "that I'll not stand fer ut."

"Fer phwat?" demanded Tom.

"No sooner do ye get settled down to work," Ryan went on, ignoring his question, "than ye're raggin' up fer downtown. I want ye to onderstand right now, that what raisin' hell is

done, I'll do meself. Humph! About to do the Tarpy act already! Annywan would think, to see ye, that ye was goin' out into sassiety wit Weed."

"I'm goin' to shtay on the job, if that's what ye mane," said Tom. "Me clothes is me own affair."

The Old Man came on in, half mollified. There was nothing that he liked so well, at the bottom of his heart, as club-like repartee and a certain measure of defiance. "Wear what ye plase," he growled. "Only when a man does that it luks like Seattle or a drunk to me." He digressed at once to the tunnel. "The engineers found center just now," he said; "right in the middle of the breast. Ye're doin' fine. Kape ut up and ye'll do the holin' afther all, instead of the other side gettin' ut." He lit a cigar and gave Tom one; they smoked together in silence for some minutes.

"I'm off fer Seattle in the marnin'," Ryan said finally. "I come over to tell ye. I'll be gone a week or ten days, to see about gettin' ready fer the new job."

As The Old Man left, Tom looked again at his watch. He snapped it shut and fidgeted

in his chair; time was going slowly. Mechanically, he turned to his desk and reopened the catalogue. He stared at the page, then said aloud, uncertainly: "I wonder if 'twill be all-right?"

His eyes were intent upon an illustration. It was the picture of a toilet set—the manifold small articles which women strew upon dresser tops, and use to adorn themselves. The printed matter upon the page described it minutely, going over each small piece, extolling its merits. Tom had read the description slowly many times. It sounded right.

It was an expensive affair. To his mind, it represented daintiness and refinement. He had picked upon it for this reason. And the choice had not been made suddenly. It had taken days and had demanded help for its making. For in the beginning, he had been at a loss, puzzled between this and other things, adrift in a strange world, where women lived. At length he had confided in The Doctor. Half diffidently, he had explained what he wanted to do. And The Doctor had turned him to this decision. "The most tasteful thing

you could get, Mr. Morton," he had said, impressively.

That had settled it. Tom had ordered the toilet set. He had sent a good part of last month's pay check to the Seattle house. And to-night the package was due at The Doctor's, where there was, besides the post-office, an express office. It would come by this evening's train. He would take it to Nora Ryan.

Since he had limped away from Mrs. Moran's, he had not seen Nora, save casually. Once he had called on the hill, intending to visit her; but he had gone instead to the Moran cottage. A constraint had overwhelmed him at the last moment, when he stood on the railroad track with the two paths up the hill lying before him. That diffidence had kept him at "D" quarters twice afterward. It had made him imagine a hundred barriers existing between him and this girl who had nursed him; it had made him conjure up a hundred rebuffs which might come to him if he presumed to make the call. He had been tortured between desire and this feeling, until finally he had taken the bit in his teeth and made up his mind

to do this thing—to get a present for her which would show his gratitude; to take it to the house and to depart at once. But, in spite of the last part of the resolution, he had, when he ordered the toilet set, sent to a Seattle clothing store for the blue serge suit and the yellow shoes, the white shirt, and a hat like The Car-tender had worn that Christmas Eve.

He took the hat now from its nail and donned it carefully, so that it might not dis-arrange his parted hair. The whistle of the evening train was sounding on the last leg of the switchback. It would take some time between the train's arrival and the sorting of the mail. And until he had gotten through with this, The Doctor would not be at liberty. Moreover, Tom wanted to wait until everyone had left the post-office. He dallied in the timber sheds, where some of the more reckless of the men grinned at his new attire. He showed no sign that he noticed them, but it bothered him. He felt ill at ease, and he gave his orders to the foreman curtly.

He walked slowly away, down the dump. The outside gang were at work—the night shift—beside the track. There were six of them

shoveling the muck over the brink. They were short-bodied men, thick-chested, and the eyes of one or two of them slanted downward, six Slavs. As he approached, they bent with sudden energy to their toil, swinging their shovels with accelerated speed, throwing the muck far from them. He knew that the low word had been spoken, the warning that he came. It took his mind back three years, and his face softened with sympathy for the eager, big-boned boy that he had been.

He was walking slowly, with his hands behind his back. He recalled that other soft evening, when his heart had been wrung by homesickness and he had worn his father's coat and hat; when they had laughed at him; Nora had smiled mirthfully on seeing him. He must have been uncouth. He flushed and the constraint came over him. After all, he was a rough man, of the work; and she might smile now, if he came to her door. But he had fought that battle too many times of late to let the feeling endure.

The earth beneath his feet trembled vaguely, a faint pulsation, like a labored breath within its depths. He knew the feeling; they had

shot the heading. His mind went to the rock-bound chamber, where men were already rushing in among the hanging nitro gases; where he had run at The Gunner's heels; where he had raced with Kennedy. And Kennedy was dead, buried on the lonely hillside. He raised his head slowly; his eyes went to the mountains, the walling slopes, black-green with hemlock forests, snow-patched where their jagged summits cut the evening sky. A star glowed soft above them, yellow in the blue. He looked at it a long time, feeling vaguely that his youth was gone.

Lights were glowing on the dump now. When he passed the row of flimsy wooden buildings of the town, he saw their interiors ablaze with the glare of the lamps. The sound of many voices came through the doors, with it the staccatto music of the pianos, the shrill, mirthless laughter of the women, the clicking of the gamblers' chips. The crowd milled on the floors like bewildered cattle. He saw among the moving faces many that he knew. He saw Tarpy bending over a table rolling the dice from his hard hand, his scarred face tense with eagerness; then suddenly grown

black, the coarse lips writhing to curses. He saw The Gunner leaning limp against the wall; the man who had taught him, who knew more than any of them knew about the rock and how to break it; dissolving now into stupidity of intoxication. Behind the bar he saw Riley, smiling craftily as he cashed a check. The things went past his vision like swift pictures on a screen. They were like pictures of another world, a world that he had known. These men—he looked upon them from a perspective—he had envied them; he had looked up to them; he had toiled with them recklessly and lived with them wantonly; he had mastered them. Now he was master of those who drove them, maker of plans for those who directed them. The responsibility for their work was all his. He knew it now, he felt the weight of it, a potent thing that made his actions sure. He had known it for some time—since his mind had been so much away from the tunnel, wandering upon the hill. He hurried past the wide-open doors toward The Doctor's.

The Doctor had the package in his hand when Tom reached the counter. He was looking at the new clothes, smiling politely, full

of dignity. "A fine fit," he said, "my word, they become you well."

Tom's smile had earnestness of inquiry. "Do they now?" he asked.

"Indeed they do," said The Doctor. "And now the package." He showed Tom where to sign his name and when this had been done—none too quickly—Tom took the package in his hands. He looked at its red labels doubtfully.

"Say Doc," he said, "what am I to do?" He pointed at the wrappings, "I shuddn't be packin' ut up that way shud I?"

The Doctor shook his head. "By no means," said he, "bring it inside, we'll see to that."

In the privacy of the little sitting room they cut the cords and the green plush-covered box was disclosed. It lay before them. "Stunning!" said The Doctor, "That is ripping!"

Tom said nothing. He was looking at the green plush-covered box, half awed. It was a splendid thing, of another world than his, dainty and at once magnificent. He touched it with the tips of his large fingers and the catch that held the lid sprang open. He raised the lid. The interior was lined with green silk;

it was filled with things which he did not know, which he never seen before, silver things that gleamed, glistening cut glass bottles. He stared at them. Then he closed the cover, dusting it with his handkerchief where his finger ends had touched it.

He looked at The Doctor. "'Tis the goods alright," he said proudly.

"The tastiest thing you could have gotten, Mr. Morton," said The Doctor. He wrapped it carefully in tissue paper and narrow silk ribbons. "There you are," he said finally. "Have a drink?"

But Tom was on his way to the door. The Doctor shook his head and smiled after him wisely.

The road to Ryan's cottage lay across the dump, along the railroad track and up a narrow, winding path. It was not what one might call a long road, nor was it very short. And yet to Tom it seemed very long—until he had reached the path. Then it seemed to him that it had been all too short. He saw a bit of dust on his coat and brushed it off with his handkerchief, then he flicked some more dust from his yellow tan shoes. His feet

dragged; he shut his teeth and climbed the path. He was holding the tissue paper package in the crook of one big arm. All his constraint was with him now. His tread upon the porch seemed to shake the house. And when he had knocked at the door he grew suddenly cold with an idea that Nora might not be at home. She answered his knock while he was in the midst of the thought.

"Why, good evening, Mr. Morton," she said.

He thrust the package toward her; then stopped the movement and raised his free hand to the new hat. "I brought this," he was saying; and it was not what he had planned to tell her at all. She took the package from him to relieve him.

"Come in and sit down," she bade him, and his plans for quick departure recurred to him after he had somewhat awkwardly taken one of the plush-covered chairs. He was here; he sat uneasily not knowing just what to say, conscious mainly of the fact that his yellow shoes were hurting him, shifting his feet uneasily.

"How well you're looking," she said, "as well as if you'd never been hurt!"

"Yis," he said vaguely. "Yis, I'm well." He looked at the package, lying on the table, and he flushed; then, as he had always done in difficulty, he plunged in.

"I wanted to give ye somethin,' a present—because ye were good to me—to thank ye fer ut." He was wondering at her self-possession, feeling lost before it.

She turned to the package. "I'd like to open it; may I?" she asked.

"Sure," he said. "Let's do ut now." He was smiling eagerly.

When she had exclaimed aloud—a little enraptured "oh"—and had followed it with more exclamations, he felt easy in his mind. After all he had chosen well. It was a relief. She called her mother and he rose, flushing again to take her hand.

"Such a pretty color," Nora was saying.

He laughed. "'Tis a good color, me own color, grane."

"Indade yis," Mrs. Ryan smiled at him. "Ye may say that, a good color."

Then he found that he was talking easily about the work and his mended bones, talking to the two of them. His smarting feet brought him back to himself and to his constraint; he moved them uneasily. "I must be going," he told them.

It had not been so hard after all. And she had not laughed at him. Indeed it had been very easy—and very pleasant. He went before her to the door feeling a little too big for the things about him. On the porch he stood uncertainly, his hat in his two large hands. "I'll be afther sayin' goodnight, I guess," he said.

Mrs. Ryan came and stood beside Nora. "We'd like to have ye come again, anny avenin' when 'tis convanient," said she.

He looked swiftly toward Nora's eyes. They repeated the invitation, "Yes, won't you come?" she asked.

"Indade," he said quickly, "I will if ye don't mind."

He did not remember the things among which he walked, going to "D" quarters; but he knew that he walked on air.

CHAPTER XXII

It was three months later when Jerry Morley's shift, returning to the smoke-filled heading, found what they had hoped to see—a hole where there had been a granite wall, a ragged interval that met the eastern bore.

“’Twas fine,” The Old Man told Tom at “D” quarters. “The engineers was right to a hair; and do ye know, we’ve holed her afther nigh onto four years wit less throuble an’ less men killed than iver I see in anny wan year’s work before.” He puffed at his cigar, red-faced, his gray eyes gleaming. “I misdoubted a while back,” he went on, “but what the other side wud do the thrick. They had all the best of ut, until ye tuk charge.” He stopped suddenly, pulling himself up. That was the biggest compliment he had ever paid. And Tom was disconcertingly silent.

“’Twas good luck an’ good min did ut fer me,” Tom said finally.

"And now," said Ryan, "I'm aff again fer Seattle to-morrow. 'Tis takin' more time than I looked fer, gettin' ready there. I'll be away a week annyhow, this trip."

He had been absent for long intervals of late and this was the first talk they had been able to get together for some time. They made the best of it discussing details of the job's winding up.

"By that time," Ryan said when they had done with the last of these, "I'll be ready fer ye down below." He paused and looked at Tom half frowning. He was battling with an impulse; and prudence finally gained the victory. "I c'n give ye a place bossin'," he said, "and chances are ye can work up to walker."

Tom thanked him absently. The Old Man rose to go.

"Set down," said Tom, "if ye've a minute ye c'n give me." His face was a little graver than usual; it looked almost drawn. Ryan looked at it curiously as he took the chair. They were both silent for a moment. "Well?" asked The Old Man, "what's on yer mind?"

"'Tis this," said Tom quietly. "Ye've been away a good bit av late and I've not had the

chance to tell ye before, I'm going to marry Nora."

"You're going to marry Nora?" Ryan leaped from his chair. His face became deep crimson. "Just say that again," he asked slowly.

"To marry Nora," Tom repeated quietly. "She said the word a week ago." He raised his hand in a silencing gesture as Ryan stamped his booted foot. "I ask yer lave," he went on steadily. His voice was even but it had respect—he was of a sudden realizing that Ryan was an older man.

"Ye ask my lave," Ryan repeated, then words came to him.

"Blackguard me all ye like," said Tom when he had done. "A rough man I have been and I know ut, none betther. But I am as good as ye, and I have done what was my right. 'Twas yer wife asked me to the house herself."

"My wife," shouted Ryan, "I'll see about this." He blustered wildly, cursing, threatening. "I'll see me wife and I'll see what this is," he said finally. "To marry Nora!"—he stamped out of the room.

Tom had been alone for an hour when The

Cartender came in. "Ye luk," said he, "as if ye'd lost yer best friend. What's gone wrong wit ye?"

"I've rowed wit Ryan," said Tom.

The Cartender looked at him sharply; then he smiled expansively, "Oho," he said, "oho, ye've rowed wit Ryan. That wud be over Nora."

"Be quiet, man," said Tom sternly. "What do ye know av Nora?"

"Only this," said The Cartender, aggressively, "only what Morans knows an' ivery wan on the hill knows; that ye two will some day marry. Have folk no sinse nor eyes? An' so ye rowed wit Ryan. Well, don't let that disturb ye. 'Tis Ryan's old woman runs that house, not Ryan." He grinned and went away, with a clap on Tom's shoulder.

It was nearly noon before Ryan came back from talking with his wife. He sat down heavily. "Got a cigar about ye?" he asked. When Tom handed him one he lighted it and puffed in silence for a moment. "About that job," he said, "ye will take charge at the north portal fer a few mont's till we get started. By that time ye'll know saft ground work.

And ye will be ready then to run the whole thing."

"Ye mane?" asked Tom, and his voice was strained with eagerness.

"I mane," said Ryan, "that bein' a married man ye will be settled down then and fit fer superintendent."

It takes some people longer than others to tell a thing. This is in part because the language of different persons, speaking what is called the same tongue, varies widely. The hard rock men used English above all other purposes for quick expression. Jerry Morley utilized the advantages of their speech a few years later by a bunk-house stove. The circle of drill runners hearkened while he raised his grizzled head and removed his black pipe from his lips to impart a history. Said Jerry—

"White Hat Morton they call him; but niver to his face. 'Twas at Snowslide we first seen him, a raw Mick. He was grane then but his fists was hard. Wanst he licked five min. He pounded his way up to headin' boss. Then he got wise an' cut out whiskey an' they made him walker. Afther that he married

Gunnysack Ryan's Nora. Now luk at him, driver av us all!"

Only one thing did Jerry omit. His tongue was not apt at handling gentler things like love.

THE END

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